The History of Contra

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Contra (Arcade)

The groundbreaking first installment that gave birth to the series

The first installment in the Contra series that kicked off years of alien blasting to come. The two big features of this game are the transitions between horizontal side-scrolling, vertical scrolling, and pseudo-3D stages.The game's larger-than-life bosses and massive fortress backdrop left a lasting impression on players.

Story

On September 12, 2631, a meteor crashed into the Galuga archipelago off the coast of New Zealand. Two years later, the archipelago was occupied by hostile aliens known as the Red Falcon, whose sole mission is to exterminate humankind. To combat this, the Earth Marine Headquarters dispatched Bill Rizer and Lance Bean with one mission: destroy the Red Falcon base.

▲ The 3:4 aspect ratio allowed for the towering fortress to be fully conveyed.

DATA

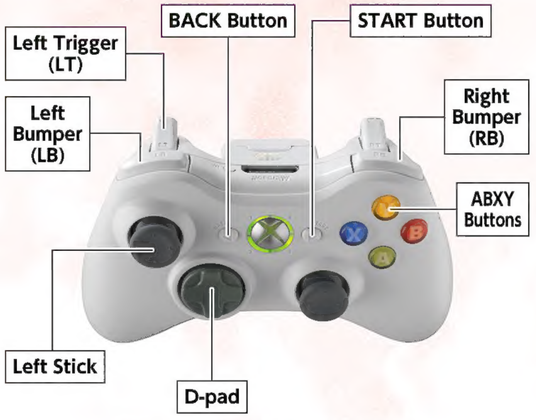
Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra	Arcade	February 20, 1987
NA	Contra	Arcade	1987
EU	Gryzor	Arcade	1987

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
START Button: Start/Join game BACK Button: Insert credits
LB: Rapid Fire ON/OFF (Hold to keep firing)

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

⬇	Prone	A/Y	Fire Weapon
B/X	Jump	RB+A/Y	Rapid Fire
⬇ + B/X	Drop down	Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward



Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller
Note: Can only fire weapon forward on pseudo-3D stages

Keyboard controls

Cursor keys: Move
Z/S: Fire Weapon
Q: Rapid Fire ON/OFF
(Hold to keep firing)
X/A: Jump
1: Open Options Menu
W+Z/S: Rapid Fire
ENTER: Start/Join game
TAB: Insert Credits

These six items are your key to victory

Shoot power-up capsules or sensors to get these items. Details on all six can be found on the right. Keep in mind the Rapid Fire and Barrier items will only appear if no other item is currently being used. We recommend the Spread Gun, which is useful in nearly any situation.

Item	Details
Rapid Fire	Increases the traveling speed of bullets.
Machine Gun	Continually fires shots as long as the attack button is held down.
Spread Gun	Simultaneously fires outwards in 5 directions.
Laser	Boasts both penetrating and destructive power. Can only be fired one shot at a time.
Fireball	Shoots fireballs that travel in an arc.
Barrier	Protects the player from harm for approximately 32 seconds.

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Super Contra

The quest for freedom continues

This sequel to the original arcade version of Contra brings with it better visuals and an improved playing experience. Top-down view stages replace pseudo-3D stages from the previous installment. Items now "stack," meaning that picking up the same one twice in a row increases its power.

Story

One year has passed since the Red Falcon's invasion. Peace had returned to Earth, and all seemed well... Until one fateful day. A distress signal was sent out by General Hal, a commander of the Earth Federation Army, who was attending a joint military exercise with the GX Army in South America. Sensing something had gone seriously wrong, leaders of the Earth Federation Government dispatched Bill Rizer and Lance Bean to investigate the matter.

▲There are no longer any pseudo-3D levels, but the amount of levels that offer a sense of depth have increased.

DATA

Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Super Contra: Alien no Gyakushu	Arcade	January 28, 1988
NA	Super Contra	Arcade	1988
EU	Super Contra	Arcade	1988

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
START Button: Start/Join game BACK Button: Insert credits
LB: Rapid Fire ON/OFF (Hold to keep firing)

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

⬇	Prone	A/Y	Fire weapon
B/X*	Jump	RB+A/Y	Rapid Fire
⬇ +B/X	Drop down	Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward

*Uses Mega Shell in top-down stages

Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor keys: Move
Z/S: Fire Weapon
Q: Rapid Fire ON/OFF
(Hold to keep firing)
X/A: Jump
1: Open Options Menu
W+Z/S: Rapid Fire
ENTER: Start/Join game
TAB: Insert Credits

Blow enemies away with your expansive arsenal!

The table on the right details the five items featured in this title. Pick up the same weapon twice in a row to increase its power and functionality. The Mega Shell can only be found in top-down view stages and is one-time use. Want more firepower? Go with the Machine Gun. Want a versatile weapon? Go with the Spread Gun.

Item	Details
Machine Gun	Continually fires shots as long as the attack button is held down. Its powered up version has a greatly improved firing rate.
Spread Gun	Simultaneously fires outwards in 3 directions. Increases to 5 different directions when powered up.
Laser	Fires a penetrating and destructive beam. Powering it up provides a longer beam. Can only be fired one shot at a time.
Bomb	Fires bombs that create an explosion upon impact. When powered up, the explosions appear in an "x" shape.
Mega Shell	Only found on top-down view stages. Destroys all enemies on-screen.

Contra (NA)

The arcade experience from the comfort of your couch

The North American NES port of Contra was released around the same time as its Famicom counterpart. As with the Famicom port, it strives to recreate the thrills of the arcade version, but with plenty of new content.

• A port even arcade fans can enjoy

Since there was a large disparity in capabilities between arcade circuit boards and home consoles during this era, a downgrade in graphics for the console port was unavoidable. However, there were a number of features added to keep fans of the arcade version interested.

▲Even with the change to a 4:3 aspect ratio, the traits that make Contra so unique were not all lost.

DATA

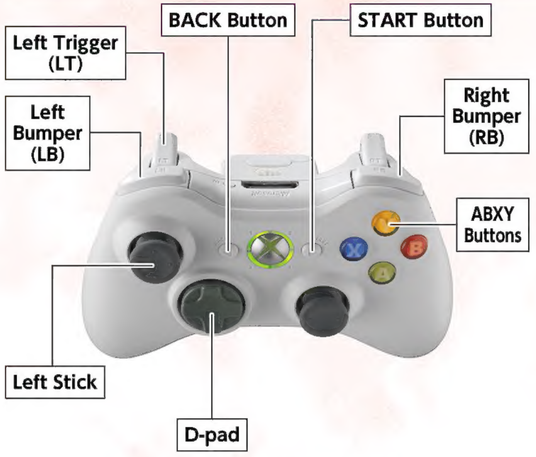
Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra	Family Computer	February 9, 1988
NA	Contra	Nintendo Entertainment System	February 12, 1988
EU	Probotector	Nintendo Entertainment System	November, 1990

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
BACK Button: Select START Button: Start/Pause game
LB: Rapid Fire ON/OFF (Hold to keep firing)

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

⬇	Prone	A/Y	Fire Weapon
B/X	Jump	RB+A/Y	Rapid Fire
⬇ + B/X	Drop down	Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward



Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor keys: Move
Z/S: Fire Weapon
Q: Rapid Fire ON/OFF
(Hold to keep firing)
X/A: Jump
1: Open Options Menu
W+Z/S: Rapid Fire
ENTER: Start/Pause game
TAB: Select

Contra Force: North American Exclusive

In Japan, the Contra series has two installments on the Famicom; Contra and Super C. However, North America received a third installment never released in Japan: Contra Force. Contra Force features side and vertical scrolling stages as well as top-down view stages. This is the same basic structure as Super C.

Playable characters in Contra Force

Burns	·Leader of the team ·Uses a machine gun and grenades ·Has high movement speed and can jump high
Iron	·The heavy weapons expert ·Best in close range combat ·Has slower movement speed and shorter jumps
Smith	·The sniper ·Only member who can use homing missiles ·Has average movement speed and jumps
Beans	·The demolitions expert ·Uses multiple types of explosive weapons ·Has very high movement speed

Contra (JP)

コントラ 魂斗羅

A Famicom version with more features

This port was released on the Famicom one year after the arcade version. It featured larger maps and more variety in enemy attacks which made for a more challenging experience. The overall presentation of the game also improved with the addition of cutscenes between stages.

How many differences can you find?

Although the North American NES edition offers basically the same content as the Famicom edition, minor differences can be found such as its presentation. Some examples include the swaying of the leaves in the Jungle stage, the snowstorms in the tundra, the opening cutscene, and the dialogue scenes between stages. Longtime fans of the series can have a little extra fun while playing by looking for the differences between versions.

▲One of the most noticeable differences with the NA edition is the addition of snowstorms.

DATA

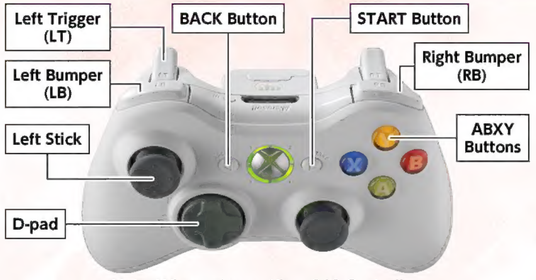
Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra	Family Computer	February 9, 1988
NA	Contra	Nintendo Entertainment System	February 12, 1988
EU	Probotector	Nintendo Entertainment System	November, 1990

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
BACK Button: Select START Button: Start/Pause game
LB: Rapid Fire ON/OFF (Hold to keep firing)

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

⬇	Prone	A/Y	Fire Weapon
B/X	Jump	RB+A/Y	Rapid Fire
⬇ + B/X	Drop down	Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward



Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor keys: Move
Z/S: Fire Weapon
Q: Rapid Fire ON/OFF
(Hold to keep firing)
X/A: Jump
1: Open Options Menu
W+Z/S: Rapid Fire
ENTER: Start/Pause game
TAB: Select

Sound Mode

At the title screen, press the START Button while holding down both B/X and A/Y	Enter Sound Mode
A/Y	Play
B/X	Pause
START Button	Return to title screen

A quick rundown of differences in the Famicom edition

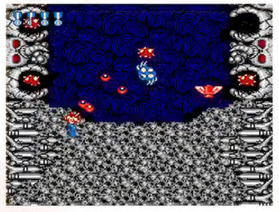
While the arcade version was designed for a single playthrough, the Famicom version was meant to be played multiple times. Players could start the game over at a higher difficulty each time they beat the game. "Mass Destruction," a new item that destroyed all enemies on the screen was also added. Another new gameplay element absent in the Arcade edition was the addition of "death pits," which would take a life from the player upon falling in.

▶While the graphics themselves are of a lower quality than the Arcade edition, the presentation was improved through the addition of dialogue scenes between stages and other features.

◀The Famicom edition was made into more of a platforming action game by adding "death pits," which took a life from the player upon falling in.

Super C

The best of both arcade installments in one game



This installment is the home console port of the arcade game Super Contra. Considering the numerous changes and additions to the game from its arcade incarnation, it could even be called a remake. Of particular note are the additions of all-new stages, where unknown dangers await the player.

Gameplay that goes "deeper" than ever before

For the first time in the Contra series, players can dive deep into the depths of vertical scrolling stages. It truly captures the essence of plunging further and further into enemy territory. The “death pits” in the previous installments are in this game as well, making it ever more important for players to carefully gauge their jumps.

▲ Are you brave enough venture to down below?

DATA

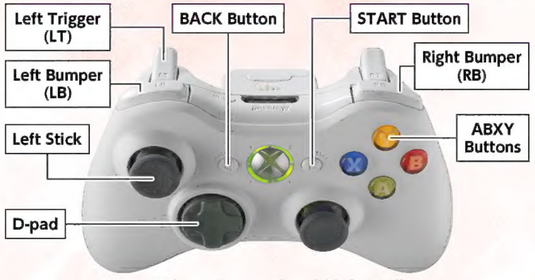
Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Super Contra	Family Computer	February 2, 1990
NA	Super C	Nintendo Entertainment System	April 5, 1990
EU	Probotector II: Return of the Evil Forces	Nintendo Entertainment System	August, 1992

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
BACK Button: Select START Button: Start/Pause game
LB: Rapid Fire ON/OFF (Hold to keep firing)

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

⬇	Prone	A/Y	Fire Weapon
B/X	Jump	RB+A/Y	Rapid Fire
⬇ + B/X	Drop down	Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward



Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor keys: Move
Z/S: Fire Weapon
Q: Rapid Fire ON/OFF
(Hold to keep firing)
X/A: Jump
1: Open Options Menu
W+Z/S: Rapid Fire
ENTER: Start/Pause game
TAB: Select

Sound Mode

At the title screen, press the START Button while holding down both B/X and A/Y	Enter Sound Mode
A/Y	Play
B/X	Pause
START Button	Return to title screen

Power-ups you've come to know and love

Although the arcade version had items stack, this game features the same power-up system found in the original Contra. This means that the Rapid Fire is back on the menu! In another departure from the arcade edition, this game does not allow players to control the height of their jumps; instead, all jumps are performed at a fixed height, as was the case in the original Contra.

▶ While elements such as stage maps and enemies are based on the arcade edition, the power-ups and player movements are based on the original Contra (home console edition).

◀ The designs of the power-up items are also based on the original Contra (home console versions), meaning players of the original will feel right at home.

Contra III: The Alien Wars

All new game, same great Contra

This installment is Contra reborn, built from the ground up specifically for the SNES. The rotation, zoom-in, and zoom-out of layers made capable by the SNES hardware are put to good use here, and the top-down view stages have players explore the level by rotating the background. Many mainstays of the Contra series first appeared in this game, such as grabbing walls and ceilings and weapon switching.

Story

After being defeated countless times by the Contra, the Red Falcon mobilized its entire army for a full-scale invasion of Earth. Nation by nation, humanity fell to the alien forces who possessed superior technology and vastly outnumbered the humans. Six months after the invasion, most of human civilization has been reduced to rubble. That is when Bill and Lance emerged once again to fight the Red Falcon.

▲The background-rotating, top view stages are one of the many unique features of this title.

DATA

Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra Spirits	Super Famicom	February 28, 1992
NA	Contra III: The Alien Wars	Super Nintendo Entertainment System	March 26, 1992
EU	Super Probotector: Alien Rebels	Super Nintendo Entertainment System	September 12, 1992

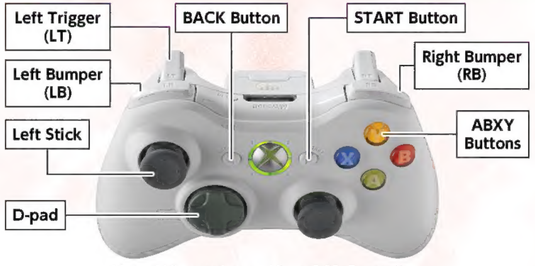
Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
START Button: Start/Pause game

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

Side Scrolling Stages

⬇	Prone	X	Fire Weapon
A	Jump	RB + X	Steady Fire
B	Use Bomb	LB + RB + X	Spin Shot
Y	Switch weapon	Jump then ⬇ + X	Fire downward



Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor Keys: Move
Z: Jump
X: Use Bomb
A: Fire Weapon
S: Switch Weapon
Q: (Left Bumper)
W: (Right Bumper)
1: Open Options Menu
ENTER: Start/Pause game
TAB: Display Map

Top-down View Stages

BACK Button	Display map	LB	Turn left
A	Prone	RB	Turn right

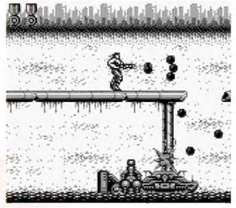
Double the options for double the challenge

The seven types of items featured in this game are shown in the table on the right. With the exception of the Barrier and M-80,000 Helio Bomb, players can equip themselves with two different weapons during play, freely switching between them as the situation demands. Picking the right tool for the task is the key to victory, as some weapons may be better suited for certain situations than others. The weapon currently in use is lost when the player loses a life, meaning it may be best to hold off on bringing out the most useful one until absolutely necessary.

Item	Details
Spread Gun	Simultaneously fires outwards in 5 directions.
Crush Gun	Short-range weapon best suited to destroying obstacles.
Homing Gun	Fires shots that chase enemies.
Flame Thrower	Short-range weapon that burns enemies nearby.
Laser	Fires a penetrating and destructive beam.
Barrier	Grants invincibility for a certain amount of time. While active, the player can run into enemies to damage them.
M-80,000 Helio Bomb	A weapon that deals massive damage to all enemies on-screen. Players can carry more than one at a time.

Operation C

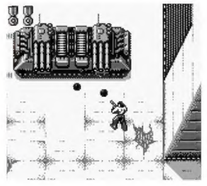
A lack of color can't hold this beast of a game back



Operation C for Game Boy is not a port. Instead, it is an original installment that combines elements from both Contra and Super C. Despite the graphical limitations of the handheld system, all of the features unique to Contra are still present. There are five areas in all, both side-scrolling and top-down view sections.

Story

Red Falcon's invasions were prevented two times over by the Contra. However, a new threat looms on the horizons... An evil nation hungry for global power was secretly collecting data on the war between the Contras and the Red Falcon, and are now attempting to weaponize the aliens for their own gain. Learning of this, leaders of the Earth Federation assigned Bill Rizer to a secret mission: Infiltrate the research facility, and foil the evil nation's dastardly plans!



▲ This installment includes side-scrolling and top-down view sections.

DATA

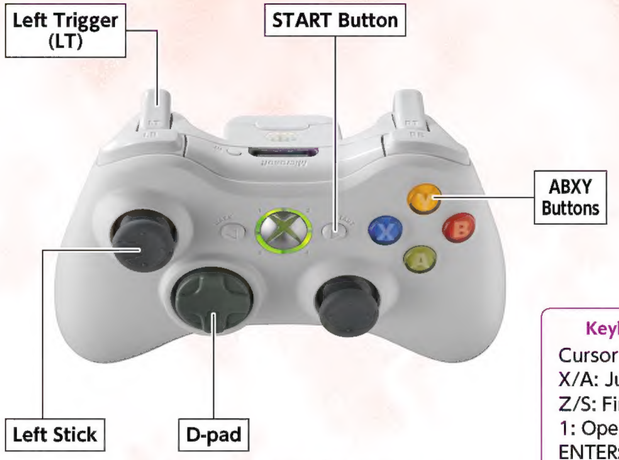
Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra	Game Boy	January 8, 1991
NA	Operation C	Game Boy	February 5, 1991
EU	Probotector	Game Boy	January 30, 1992

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
START Button: Start/Pause game

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

⬇	Prone	A/Y	Fire Weapon
B/X	Jump	Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward
⬇ + B/X	Drop down		



Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls
Cursor Keys: Move
X/A: Jump
Z/S: Fire Weapon
1: Open Options Menu
ENTER: Start/Pause game

An arsenal to strike fear into your enemies!

There are four types of weapons available in this game (including the default rifle), as shown in the table to the right. The Rifle can be fired rapidly, just like the Machine Gun in the original Contra. As for the Homing Gun, while its ability to hit enemies without needing to aim makes it a very powerful weapon, you'll need to keep your eyes peeled to find it, since it becomes a hidden item starting with Area 4.

Item	Details
Rifle	Bill's default weapon. Continuously fires shots as long as the attack button is held down.
Spread Gun	Simultaneously fires outwards in 3 directions. Increases to 5 different directions when powered up.
Fire Gun	Weapon that shoots out a blast that splits in 4 directions upon impact. The blasts deal damage after splitting in 4 directions as well.
Homing Gun	Simultaneously fires shots in 3 directions. Once fired, they will home in on enemies.

Contra: Hard Corps

Choose between four unique characters in this spin-off installment

This installment is set five years after the events of Contra III: The Alien Wars. Bill and Lance do not appear as playable characters; instead, four heroes with different abilities take center stage. Your choices matter. The decisions you make determine the stages you play. While most stages are side-scrolling there is still plenty of variety. From the vehicle sections to the pseudo-3D sections, all of it makes for a thrilling and fun-filled experience.

Story

Five years had passed since the Alien Wars, and mankind was slowly beginning to recover. However, the rapid development of genetic engineering and cyborg technologies during the war had spawned a new, fearsome type of crime unimaginable before the conflict. To combat this threat, the government set up a special team of elite troops, the Contra Hard Corps.

▲ Your choices determine which stages you play.

DATA

Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra: The Hard Corps	Mega Drive	September 15, 1994
NA	Contra: Hard Corps	Genesis	September 14, 1994
EU	Probotector	Mega Drive	October 11, 1994

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
START Button: Start/Pause game, Confirm

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the in-game Options Menu.

⬇	Prone
B	Jump
⬇ + B	Slide
X	Switch Weapon
A	Fire Weapon
Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward
Y Hold A then X	Switch between Shot I and Shot II

*Shot I : Can move while attacking
*Shot II : Cannot move while attacking

Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor keys: Move
Z: Fire Weapon
S:Switch between shot I and shot II
X: Jump
A: Switch Weapon
1: Open Options Menu
ENTER: Start/Pause game, Confirm

Controls for dialogue scenes

A	Display next message
B	Confirm

Different characters, different strategies

Each player character has a set of unique weapons, which can be obtained or selected as they progress through the game. While Ray Poward and Sheena Etranzi use weapons similar to those from previous Contra games, Brad Fang and Browny have many new weapons at their disposal.

Ray Poward

Vulcan Laser	Rapidly fires small laser beams.
Crash	Explodes on contact.
Spread	Simultaneously fires outwards in 5 directions.
Homing	Fires shots that home in on enemies.

Sheena Etranzi

Genocide Vulcan	Vulcan cannon with a high rate of fire.
Shower Crash	Fires exploding shells in an arc.
Break Laser	Fires penetrating laser beams.
Ax Laser	Fires homing laser beams.

Brad Fang

Beast Shooter	Vulcan cannon with shots that spread and expand.
Power Punch	Short-range weapon that throws out punches.
Flame Thrower	Weapon that spews penetrating flames.
Psychic Blaster	Has massive power and charges up.

Browny

Victory Laser	Fires penetrating V-shaped laser beams.
Gemini Scatter	Fires short-range boomerang-like shots.
Electromagnetic Yo-Yo	A Yo-yo that homes in on enemies.
Shield Chaser	Creates homing shots which provide offense and defense.

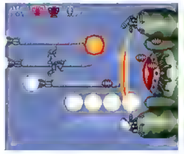
Super Probotector: Alien Rebels

Fight as robots in this European version of Contra III

This installment is the European version of Contra III: The Alien Wars. In this version, Bill and Lance were replaced by the combat robots "Probotectors," and the enemy soldiers were also changed to robots as well. As this version of the game was largely unavailable to Contra fans outside of Europe, this is an excellent opportunity to see a familiar game in a different light.

Story

For the most part, the Probotector series follows the same story as the Contra series - a war between mankind and an alien menace. In other words, aside from switching out Bill and Lance for the Probotectors, very little has changed story-wise for this European release of Contra III: The Alien Wars.



▲ They may be Probotectors, but they move just like Bill and Lance.

DATA

Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra Spirits	Super Famicom	February 28, 1992
NA	Contra III: The Alien Wars	Super Nintendo Entertainment System	March 26, 1992
EU	Super Probotector: Alien Rebels	Super Nintendo Entertainment System	September 16, 1992

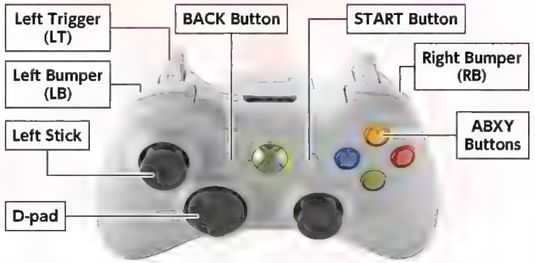
Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
START Button: Start/Pause game

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the Options Menu.

Side Scrolling Stages

⬇	Prone	X	Fire Weapon
A	Jump	RB + X	Steady Fire
B	Use Bomb	LB + RB + X	Spin Shot
Y	Switch weapon	Jump then ⬇ + X	Fire downward



Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor Keys: Move
Z: Jump
X: Use Bomb
A: Fire Weapon
S: Switch Weapon
Q: (Left Bumper)
W: (Right Bumper)
1: Open Options Menu
ENTER: Start/Pause game
TAB: Display Map

Top-down View Stages

BACK Button	Display map	LB	Turn left
A	Prone	RB	Turn right

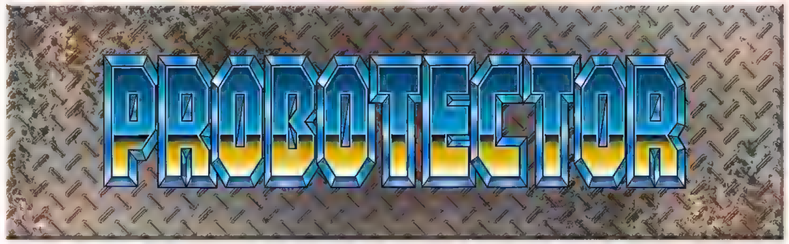
It's RD008 and RC011 against the alien menace!

In the Probotector series, Bill and Lance have been replaced by Probotectors RD008 and RC011, respectively. While they may look quite different to the player, appearances can be deceiving. The controls and gameplay remain largely unchanged from those for Contra III: The Alien Wars.

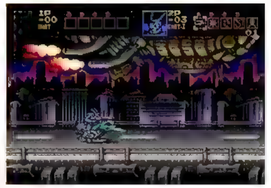
▶ While RD008 is usually colored blue, it is silver in this installment.

◀ RC011 is red in this installment.

Probotector



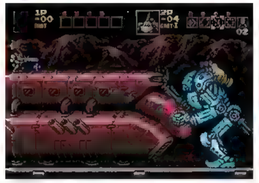
Four Probotectors explode into action on the Mega Drive!



This installment is the European version of Contra: Hard Corps, which was a spin-off title in the Contra series. At the time, there was much anticipation and excitement from players surrounding this installment. This was understandable; not only were Sega consoles highly popular in the European game market, but this was the first ever installment of the Probotector series to be on the Mega Drive.

Story

The storyline is mostly the same as that of Contra: Hard Corps. The major difference is the fact that the non-robot playable characters were all replaced by the combat robot "Probotectors." As one of the playable characters in Contra: Hard Corps was already a robot (Browny), its design remained unchanged.



▲This sequence in one of the final levels is a highlight of this title.

DATA

Region	Title	Platform	Release
JP	Contra: The Hard Corps	Mega Drive	September 15, 1994
NA	Contra: Hard Corps	Genesis	September 14, 1994
EU	Probotector	Mega Drive	October 11, 1994

Controls

LT: Open Options Menu
START Button: Start/Pause game, Confirm

Note: Default control settings. Controls can be reassigned in the in-game Options Menu.

⬇	Prone
B	Jump
⬇ + B	Slide
X	Switch Weapon
A	Fire Weapon
Jump then ⬇ + A/Y	Fire downward
Y Hold A then X	Switch between Shot I and Shot II

*Shot I : Can move while attacking
*Shot II : Cannot move while attacking

Note: When using an Xbox 360 Controller

Keyboard controls

Cursor keys: Move
Z: Fire Weapon
S:Switch between shot I and shot II
X: Jump
A: Switch Weapon
1: Open Options Menu
ENTER: Start/Pause game, Confirm

Controls for dialogue scenes

A	Display next message
B	Confirm

The playable characters: before and after

As seen in other installments in the Probotector series, the playable characters Ray, Sheena, Brad and Browny were replaced by combat robots, the Probotectors. But it's not just their looks, their names have also been changed to CX-1, CX-2, CX-3, and CX-4.

Special Contra Interview 01

We had an in-depth talk with Nobuya Nakazato, the producer of numerous games in the Contra series, covering everything from past development stories to his visions for the future.

Nobuya Nakazato

Originally from Hachioji, Tokyo, Nobuya joined KONAMI in 1988 as a graphic designer. After working as a planner and director on many of KONAMI's games, he became General Manager in 2007, and Project Manager in 2012. He is now back in game development, and is currently working as producer on a new title. Games in the Contra series that he worked on include Contra III, Contra: Hard Corps, and Neo Contra (released in 2004; not included in this collection).

Notable Work

Title	Platform	Role
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Nintendo Entertainment System	Graphic Designer
Castlevania: The Adventure	Game Boy	Game & Graphic Designer
Twinbee 3: Poko Poko Daimaō	Family Computer	Graphic Designer
Rollergames	Nintendo Entertainment System	Game & Graphic Designer
Laser Invasion	Nintendo Entertainment System	Director/Game & Graphic Designer
Contra III: The Alien Wars	Super Nintendo Entertainment System	Director/Game & Graphic Designer
Rocket Knight Adventures	Sega Genesis	Director/Game & Graphic Designer
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Tournament Fighters	Sega Genesis	Graphic Designer
Contra: Hard Corps	Sega Genesis	Director/Game & Graphic Designer
Vandal Hearts	"PlayStation"	Director/Scenario Writer/Game & Graphic Designer
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	"PlayStation"	Graphic Designer
Vandal Hearts II	"PlayStation"	Director/Scenario Writer/Game & Graphic Designer
Contra: Shattered Soldier	"PlayStation 2"	Producer/Director/Game Designer
Contra Advance: The Alien Wars EX	Game Boy Advance	Producer/Director
Neo Contra	"PlayStation 2"	Producer/Game Designer

etc.

First Encounters with KONAMI and Contra

I joined KONAMI in 1988 as a new graduate. The company was based in Kobe at the time, which was a pretty far from my family home in Hachioji, Tokyo... It was a bit of an adventure for me, but I really loved KONAMI's games back then, like Salamander (Life Force)[*1]. I decided to go for it, and I got the job.

The Famicom (NES) was already out when I joined, but I didn't really have any experience playing console games back then. At the time I usually played PC and arcade games. When I was hired by KONAMI though, I went out and bought a Famicom and one of the games I got with it was Contra. When I played it, I thought it was great.

I had played the arcade version of Contra when I was still a student, but my thoughts on it was that the side scrolling stages on a vertical screen made it really difficult to play. I could hardly play at all with just 100 yen (Laughs). But when I played the Famicom version, I was amazed at what a great game it was.

Immediately after joining the company I was assigned to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles[*2] team, but the Super Contra (Super C) team was right next to us, so I also did some playtesting for them. Back then, newbies were tasked to do bug checks as well.

Developing Contra III

Back in the 8-bit days, development teams were made up of just three or four people, so we ended up doing a bit of everything... I programmed enemy placements and stage transitions myself, and one of the programmers developed artwork as well...

In the later stages of the project we had other people come in to help, but the game was basically made with just two programmers and two graphic designers. I was in my third year with KONAMI at the time, and the other team members were in their first and second years. Nowadays a team like that is something you don't see that often, but looking back now, I think luck was on our side, especially with our timing. In particular, the Tokyo development division had just been set up, so we didn't have any senior colleagues. We didn't have anyone to lead the way, so we had to figure everything out ourselves...but I suppose you could say that made it all the more satisfying, in a way.

Later on when we made Contra: Hard Corps, the main team was made up of six people, but still... I remember one day one of the programmers said, "Hey, I made this tune, can we use it in game?"–so we still

***1 Salamander/Life Force**
A scrolling shoot 'em up made by KONAMI, released in arcades in 1986. It was a pseudo-sequel to Gradius (1985).

***2 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**
A side-scrolling platform game based on the comic of the same name, released for the NES in 1989 by KONAMI.

had a fair amount of freedom (Laughs). If you tried that now, the sound staff would probably get pretty mad, but back then–for better and for worse–it was more like a group of friends working on something together.

At the time, KONAMI was divided into an arcade department and a PC and console department (mainly MSX and Famicom). I was a part of the console department and was there through the 8-bit, 16-bit, and 32-bit eras. A year after I was assigned to the Kobe office, there was a plan to expand the Tokyo development division, and so, partly because I was from Tokyo anyway, I was moved there. In Kobe the different development departments were on different floors, but the Tokyo office was newly set up, and everything was all on the same floor–the sales team was there, and the maintenance people... It was pretty hectic. The original Contra team was developed by the arcade development team, and they were right next to us, the console department. So we were very close to them, physically.

But still, it was pretty nerve-wrecking when I had to show the original Contra team what we had developed for the Super Famicom/SNES (Contra III). I was like, "um, this is what we made. Could you take at look at it, please?" (laughs). I was actually prepared for them to get pretty upset, but when they told me that it was different in a good way, I remember thinking "Phew!"–I was really relieved.

Concept for Contra III

Well, we had the arcade and Famicom versions as a base. So with the original Contra... Like I said before, personally I really liked the Famicom port, so now that I was going to be making a Super Famicom version of a game that I really liked, I thought long and hard about what it was that made it good.

The original Contra does have a pretty strong low-budget movie vibe to it, but as far as shooting games go, it's quite serious–quite realistic. So what we thought we could do was really crank things up a few notches and make it amusing, but not to the extent that it became a comedy. We thought about ways we could enhance those elements... Like now when you think of Contra, you think of flying around hanging from missiles (Laughs). Stuff like that was what we wanted to include. There was always the worry that hardcore fans of the original game would think we'd gone too far, but we really just went for it, and tried to make something that we truly believed was fun.

First Encounters with Video Games

To change the topic slightly, I first really became aware of video games when the Space Invaders[*3] craze started in 1978. Space Invaders-style shooting games and other action games were the norm for a while after that, and then later on, tactical and strategy games started coming out for PC... Speaking of strategy games, I liked tabletop games already, too. Where you have to roll the dice, and calculate the trajectory and stuff, and then you can finally see if you've hit your enemy's tank... I don't suppose you know Avalon Hill[*4] (laughs)?

As far as other video games go, I liked Wizardry[*5], too. 5.25 inch floppy disk games... They'd make that "clank, clank" noise when data was loading... Thinking about it now, it was because of the hardware, but I was always good at interpreting things in a way that worked for me, and it just added to the excitement–I used to think, "It's like they're really setting up a camp!" Things like that made up my formative

[*3] Space Invaders
A shooting game made by Taito Corporation, released in arcades in 1978.

[*4] Avalon Hill
An American board game company that specializes in war simulation games.

[*5] Wizardry
A 3D dungeon exploration RPG, released in 1981 by Sir-Tech.

experiences with video games.

Going Against Trends

As the trend for home video games was shifting from action games to strategy games, I suppose in a way Contra III went against that trend. Of course, RPGs and other games where you have plenty of time to think are well-suited for playing at home, and I enjoyed them, too. I just thought that it would be good to have something to counter that–something you could easily pick up and play; a form of stress-relief.

But the standard action game format up to that point–lots of weak enemies one after another, and then a short boss fight–was getting old. Hardware limitations had a lot to do with it, but I thought people were probably sick of that repetitive format by now. I wanted to make something where you could play through it without having to be prepared to really be in for the long haul each time you turned it on. And instead, make the content really dense...like music that you can listen to over and over again.

Those were the sorts of things going through my mind, and that's probably what led to it becoming a "boss rush" kind of game. So, the whole team thought over these concepts together. It's no good if ideas fail to materialize into anything concrete though, and it was my job to decide the actual route we were going to take and share that with the others.

So one thing we had as a key concept was, you know in old movies...in old horror and suspense movies, they often used to have this tag line that was like "a scare every however-many minutes!" (laughs). So I decided something should happen at least every three scrolls of the screen. I would come up with pointers like that, and then the rest of the team would fill in the gaps.

Another thing was that I consulted with the sound staff and said we wanted a Hollywood movie-style vibe. I got them to do things like having the music change as you progress through the game, like a medley–little tricks like that.

What makes a Contra game?

A soldier who's a one-man army, gruesome enemies, flip jumps... There are certain common elements, but I'd say the main thing is that it's over-the-top. If we break that down, it's the surprises that are important–it goes against your expectations, in a good way. Being an action game, using dialogue (text displayed on-screen) to surprise the player doesn't work well, so it's about finding ways to add twists into the gameplay that can be experienced directly. For example, with Contra: Shattered Soldier, which we made for the "PS2", in the intro we showed this helicopter that transforms into a powerful-looking robot, and you get a glimpse of it during the first stage, too.

So that makes the player think that the game's building up to a battle with this powerful enemy...but then when it looks like you're actually about to fight the helicopter, the real boss shows up and just destroys it in an instant. "They went to all that trouble, making the 3D model and having it transform and everything, just to have it get destroyed!?" (Laughs) It's surprises like that... It's about ways to catch the player off guard, by understanding what they'll be expecting to happen next. I think that having lots of surprises like that ties into the "over-the-top" concept that I mentioned earlier.

Contra Fans Outside of Japan

Perhaps the fact that Contra is a game that doesn't rely on language and the fact that what the player needs to do next is easily communicated visually is what resonated with players around the world. I think that in a way it manages to capture the greatest common measure of what people "understand."

I recently learned that the series in fact has a big fan base in China. So, I mean...it seems it gained popularity in places that

we had absolutely no knowledge of (laughs) and we're only able to see that now–it's an honor, as well as a surprise. Also, recently I've been thinking that maybe the fact that it's a game that can be played cooperatively is a factor in how fans remember it, too. Playing together doesn't give you that much of an advantage, either, and progressing through the stages with two players requires that you work well together. I think maybe that's what created nostalgic memories for people.

Another thing I want bring up regarding players outside of Japan is the series timeline. Back in the 8 and 16-bit era, it was common practice for our foreign marketing teams to completely change the story of a game to make it more accessible to local audiences. For example, the Japanese version of the original Contra takes place in the far future, while the US version takes place in the late 1980s. The timeline became relatively consistent starting with Contra: Shattered Soldier, but the games before it wildly vary in accuracy. So, with the release of the Contra Anniversary Collection, I'd like to take this opportunity to establish the Japanese timeline as the official canon. You can go to the Contra Chronology page of this book to read the plots of the early Contra games as they were intended.

The legacy of the Contra series

With series like Castlevania or Metal Gear, to use some other KONAMI games as examples, I think that things like the literary background and the history that the series have can be part of the charm, but with Contra the main thing is, like I said earlier, the "over-the-top" style, and the exhilarating feeling that it gives you... As long as that's there, you can probably do away with the flip jumps–either way, I don't want people to feel shackled to previous games in the series.

If it has that feeling of freedom and is packed with surprises, you can go ahead and call it a Contra game. In fact, I think that "freedom"–the low-budget movie feeling–is actually pretty important to making it feel like a Contra game. I think that nowadays there are lots of games where certain elements need to be preserved in order for it to feel like part of the series.

But for the Contra series... I mean, to start with you've got these macho soldiers, fighting off the "alien army"... I think that looseness is part of the charm, too (laughs). As long as it has that passion, as long as it's genuinely enjoyable, you can do away with whatever you want.

The Alien Wars and Contra Force are key concepts in the games, but they're partly only there as a nod to long-time fans of the series, so people should feel free to deconstruct them in whatever crazy way they want (laughs). In fact, in some ways we only tried to tie the games together as a sort of inside-joke.

The Konami Code (↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ← → ← → BA)

Well...originally that was a power-up code for the Famicom version of Gradius, but it seems to be known internationally as the "Contra Code." We were never ordered to put that code in, or anything–the different teams just did so of their own accord. I guess maybe it just felt like something was missing if you didn't put it in.

Probotector

We made those versions for Europe, starting with Contra on the Famicom, so Japanese players aren't really familiar with it. Back then video games were seen as something for children, more so than today, and having humans being gunned down was considered problematic, so we made a version with robots. Nowadays there are content rating systems, and games are recognized as a pastime for adults as well, so we're able to offer the same Contra games around the world.

Also, due to the differences between NTSC and PAL systems, the Probotector games are slowed down–slightly slower, rather. So for players who only played the Probotector versions back then, it'll be interesting for them to play the original Contra games, at their original difficulty level.

Sources of creativity

I grew up in Hachioji in Tokyo, which was more rural back then, so as a kid I used to catch bugs as entertainment. Nowadays, there are a lot of products (including games) targeting teens, but when I was young there weren't many sources of entertainment for teens, until things like Space Battleship Yamato[*6] and Mobile Suit Gundam[*7] came out. TV shows aimed at adults weren't interesting yet, and cartoons and comics were all aimed at elementary school children and younger... At that time the only things that were just right for us were imported TV shows. I used to hunt down things like Star Trek[*8] to watch. Before there was Japanese-made content aimed at young people, the Japanese youth used to seek out imported stuff to watch, you see (laughs).

I watched a lot of movies when I was at school–unfortunately videos weren't around yet, so I used to watch all the classic films in cinemas. I saw 2001: A Space Odyssey[*9] in a magazine, and found out I could watch it if I went to a cinema in Kamata (approx. 40km away from Hachioji,) so I went all the way there. They didn't used to kick people out in those cinemas, so you could stay there from morning till night, and they often used to show whole

[*6] Space Battleship Yamato
An animated television series created by Office Academy that started airing in 1972. Known in English as Star Blazers, it tells the story of the titular battleship and its journey to Planet Iscandar to save the Earth from peril.

[*7] Mobile Suit Gundam
An animated television series created by Nippon Sunrise that started airing in 1979. Set in the fictitious "Universal Century" timeline, it tells of the war between the Earth Federation and the Principality of Zeon.

series of movies, which was great. The only thing was, especially in the Battles Without Honor and Humanity[*10] series, they often used the same actor to play different roles in different movies in the same series, so that got confusing sometimes (laughs). I watched a lot of different movies, regardless of genre, so thinking back that probably became a source of lots of different ideas.

Hanging from missiles

One scene in particular that required inspiration was the stage in Contra III where you hang from moving missiles. The idea came as a result of brainstorming methods of graphical expression in-game, instead of it being a key setting to the plot.

This is getting a little technical now, but in the 8-bit and 16-bit eras, the sprite capabilities were very limited. We had to use tricks like using background tiles in clever ways to make them look like parts of a giant moving boss. The SNES allowed for something called raster scrolling, which let you manipulate the graphics scanline-by-scanline to create a ripple-like effect, so we used that in combination with different sprites to produce certain effects. And so, the missiles and helicopter in that scene are actually part of the background. We cut them off at the scanline, and shifted the sync. Due to the nature of scanlines, we couldn't move things vertically, but we were able to move them horizontally. So based on that, we thought, "Right, missiles, then." So that scene was born from an interesting method of graphical expression--a brainstorming decision that made use of crafty programming. Another similar programming story... In Contra: Hard Corps, there's a scene where there's a building blocking your path, and when you defeat the boss, it crashes into the building, causing it to collapse diagonally. The building is part of the background, and it's only one color–a simple grey box–so we manipulated the scanlines to make it move diagonally. But if we just did that then it wouldn't look like a building anymore, so we made the windows out of sprites. By moving those along with the background, it looked like the building was collapsing–we thought up lots of little optical illusions like that.

Video games today are like a technological contest--physically accurate rendering, realistic AI, and that sort of thing. But back then we were very limited in what we could do, so everything rested on these "optical illusions"–based on innovative ideas.

Future as a video game producer

Before I knew it, I'd ended up on the management side of things–as is appropriate for someone my age, I suppose–but I've still got an emotional attachment to game development, so now I'm back in the thick of things again. I'm busy getting all sorts of things ready right now. I hope everyone will like what I come up with. I'm hard at work (laughs).

I'm really happy that with Contra Anniversary Collection people will be able to play through the Contra series, including the originals. I think it'll be fun to also see how video games have evolved. For people playing the old Contra games for the first time, I'd like for them to find which elements have continued to evolve as part of video games, and which elements have been lost along the way...I mean, not that they've been lost, but...maybe it'll be interesting for people to see that there used to be games like this.

And for people who have played the games before, when they look at them now–after having played modern games--maybe the will be able to discover something new--something they didn't notice back then. I think some elements are unchanging--universal--so I hope people will pick up on those things. I hope everyone keeps on enjoying the Contra series in whatever way they like!

[*9] Star Trek
An American TV series that began airing in 1966 in the USA and in 1969 in Japan. Set in the future, it tells the story of the interstellar travels of the starship USS Enterprise.

[*9] 2001: A Space Odyssey
A science fiction film directed by Stanley Kubrick that was released in 1968. It tells the story of the spacecraft Discovery One's exploratory journey to Jupiter, and the state of emergency that its crew find themselves in.

[*10] Battles Without Honor and Humanity
A Japanese yakuza film series directed by Fukasaku Kinji, initially released in 1973. The series continued for a total of five films, and starred many popular actors at the time.

Special Contra Interview 02

We spoke via e-mail with Tom duBois, who created the illustrations used on the boxes for Super C, Contra III: The Alien Wars, and more. Here we take a look at these illustrations, and the man behind them.

Tom duBois

Illustrator. Born in 1957 in Chicago, Illinois. He created the US box artwork for numerous games in the Contra series.

——You created the box artwork for the overseas versions of many KONAMI games between 1988 and 1994. There's a sense of unity between all the illustrations--did you have a particular theme in mind when creating them?

Each particular game would dictate the direction I would take in creating something that captured the essence of that game.

——Yes, of course. So what things do you associate with the Contra series in particular?

Destroying bad guys is definitely something I can relate to!

——Contra is known for macho soldiers battling against gruesome aliens. Were there any challenges you faced when creating artwork for the series?

The challenge always was filling the space with as much action and as many characters as possible in the time I was given to complete the final art.

——Please tell us which of the illustrations you created for the Contra series is your favorite, and why.

The Alien Wars. Lots of crazy dudes in that one. My specialty!

——Your artwork for Contra III: The Alien Wars, which is on a side-oriented SNES box, is an extremely powerful piece. How did the change in format from the NES boxes affect your work--were you more motivated, or was it more challenging? And do you prefer working on a vertical or horizontal canvas?

I am equally motivated to work on every project and find them all equally challenging in their own unique way. Although if I have a choice, working on a horizontal format is a little more comfortable.

——Do you have a daily routine as an artist?

Drink strong coffee!

——Please tell us if there are any films, novels, or artists that you have been inspired by.

Film: The Man from Nowhere[*1]. Novel: The Frontiersmen by Allan Eckert[*2]. Artist: Simon Bisley[*3].

——Finally, do you have a message for Contra fans and fans of your art from around the world?

I really am grateful for the opportunities I was given to be involved in my small way and will certainly welcome any new opportunity to participate in cover art projects that may lie ahead.

CONTRA III THE ALIEN WARS

[*1] The Man from Nowhere
A movie directed by Jeong-beom Lee that was released in South Korea in 2010. It tells the story of ex-special agent Tae-sik and his battle to protect a little girl called So-mi.

[*2] Allan W. Eckert
An American author. He specialized in historical novels, often with a Native American setting.

[*3] Simon Bisley
A prolific British comic book artist known for his work with Heavy Metal magazine, among many others.

The Official Contra Timeline

The story of Contra begins with the arrival of the Red Falcon, an army of hostile aliens seeking to invade Earth. Let's look back at the many battles fought by elite soldiers known as the Contra.

Spin-off #1 ★Contra: Hard Corps
Although the events of this installment are canonical to the Contra timeline, this is one of the rare games where Bill is not a playable character. Additionally the protagonists in this game are members of a different armed force than Bill and Lance. Therefore this game could be considered a spin-off for these reasons.

Spin-off #2 Contra ReBirth
This Wii Ware exclusive installment takes place in the year 2633 of the KONTORA Era, which is a separate timeline from the installments that take place in the Common Era. Playable characters include a non-canonical version of Bill Rizer.

Contra's Chronology

In the year 2633, mankind had achieved world peace through advancements in science and technology. However, a threat from outer space was encroaching upon humanity. The Earth Marine Headquarters discovered a malicious plan by hostile extra-terrestrials to invade Earth and exterminate mankind. (Excerpts adapted from the instruction manual of Contra for the Famicom.)

Date	Title	Events	Playable Characters
A.D. 2631	——	A mysterious meteor lands in the Galuga Archipelago, off the coast of New Zealand.	——
A.D. 2633	★Contra (Arcade/NES)	The Earth Marine Headquarters discover Red Falcon's plan to invade Earth and exterminate mankind. In order to prevent this invasion, the Marines task two of their best soldiers, Bill Rizer and Lance Bean, to infiltrate and destroy Red Falcon's stronghold on the Galuga Archipelago.	Bill Rizer Lance Bean
A.D. 2634	★Super Contra(Arcade)/ ★Super C(NES)	A strange distress signal was sent out by General Hal of the Earth Federation, who was attending a joint military exercise with the GX Army in South America. Sensing that something has gone seriously wrong, the Earth Federation military dispatch Bill and Lance to investigate the matter.	Bill Rizer Lance Bean
A.D. 2635	★Operation C (Game Boy)	An evil nation hungry for global power had been secretly collecting data on the war between the Contras and the Red Falcon, and are now attempting to clone and weaponize the aliens for their own gain. Learning of this, leaders of the Earth Federation task Bill Rizer to infiltrate the evil nation's research facility and sabotage their plans.	Bill Rizer
A.D. 2636	★Contra III: The Alien Wars(SNES)	After being defeated countless times by the Contra, the Red Falcon mobilized its entire army for a full-scale invasion of Earth. Nation by nation, humanity fell to the alien forces who possessed superior technology and vastly outnumbered the humans. Six months after the invasion, most of human civilization has been reduced to rubble. That is when Bill and Lance emerged once again to fight the Red Falcon.	Bill Rizer Lance Bean
A.D. 2636	Contra 4 (Nintendo DS)	Six months have passed since the Alien Wars, and the world is still in ruins, now ruled by an alien clone created by the evil nation known as Black Viper. Only two choices remain for humanity: unconditional surrender or total annihilation. In these desperate circumstances, humanity's four greatest warriors make a last stand.	Bill Rizer Lance Bean Mad Dog Scorpion
A.D. 2641	★Contra: Hard Corps (Genesis)	After the conclusion of the Alien Wars, mankind has begun rebuilding civilization. However, the rapid development of genetic engineering and cyborg technologies during the war had spawned a new, fearsome type of crime unimaginable before the conflict. December 24th, 2641. Someone has hacked into the city's automated defense system, causing unmanned weapons to run amok in the streets, attacking any human in sight. To combat these rampaging machines, the government dispatched an elite task force known as the Contra Hard Corps.	Ray Poward Sheena Etranzi Brad Fang Browny
A.D. 2647	Contra: Shattered Soldier ("PlayStation 2")	In the year 2642, mankind lost nearly 80% of its total population due to devastating global disasters caused by the inexplicable activation of an experimental super magnetic weapon. Bill Rizer, once lauded as a hero by the public, was arrested as the culprit behind this incident, as well as the murder of his partner, Lance Bean. Five years later in 2647, a mysterious terrorist organization calling themselves the Blood Falcon commences its attack on all of mankind. The Triumvirate, a council which oversees all decision-making for the unified global government, is forced to release Bill from prison early via extraordinary legal measures to combat the menace that is the Blood Falcon.	Bill Rizer Lucia
A.D. 4444	Neo Contra ("PlayStation 2")	A deranged paramilitary organization calling themselves Neo Contra are committing heinous acts of destruction and mass genocide across the world. The federation council, seeing the gravity of the situation, awakens Bill from his cryogenic hibernation in order to destroy Neo Contra.	Bill Rizer Genbei "Jaguar" Yagyu

★ • • • Titles included in this collection

The Many Weapons of Contra

The importance of power-up items in the Contra series cannot be overstated. Here, we take a look at the various power-up items featured in the Contra series.

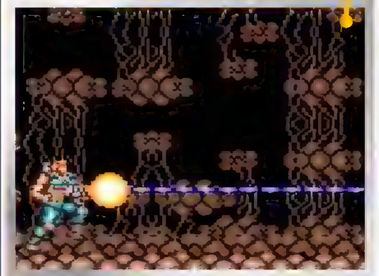
Which power-up items were featured in the most installments of the Contra series?

Many power-up items and weapons have appeared throughout the Contra series. So we've compiled a list of power-ups and weapons that are the most represented in the series. The number of appearances were counted using the 11 installments in the Contra series released in Japan, excluding installments where players had access to a fixed number of selectable weapons from the beginning (Contra: Hard Corps, Contra: Shattered Soldier, and Neo Contra.) Note that power-up items and weapons that have different names but similar effects (e.g. the Spread Gun and Spread Shot) will be counted as the same power-up/weapon.

No. 1 Spread Gun (9 appearances)

▲This staple of the Contra series has been around since the first installment. It can cover a wide area with its dispersing shots, as well as deal a substantial amount of damage close range, due to the shots being clustered before spreading out. There have been minor differences in the name of this weapon across the series, including the Spread Shot and Spread.

No. 2 Laser (8 appearances)



▲The powerful and penetrating laser makes its way into the number 2 spot. While it deals massive damage, its limited area of coverage and inability to be fired rapidly make it a risky but rewarding weapon. Longtime fans may have noticed that the length and effects of its beams differ from title to title.

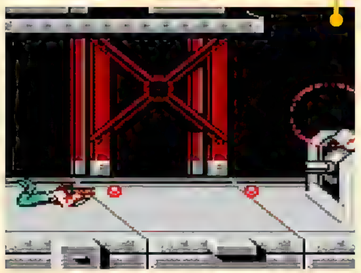
No. 3 Barrier (7 appearances)

▲This helpful item turns the player invincible for a limited amount of time. It can be a lifesaver on screens where the player is under heavy fire. In some installments, the player can even start boss battles while it is still active.

Tied for 4th place No. 4 Homing Gun (6 appearances)

▲This high-tech weapon fires shots that automatically home in on enemies. It made its first appearance in Operation C for the Game Boy, but quickly became a mainstay in the series. Its name differs from title to title (Homing Shot, Homing Missile, Hunter, etc.)

Tied for 4th place No. 4 Machine Gun (6 appearances)



▲Also coming in 4th place is the Machine Gun, which is similar to the default gun but with a higher rate of fire. The Machine Gun could be considered to be the default gun in some games; with that in mind, it is no exaggeration to say that this is a series-defining weapon alongside the Spread Gun.

Tied for 6th place No. 6 Flame Thrower (3 appearances)

Tied for 6th place No. 6 Crush Gun (3 appearances)

Installments used in the tally
Contra (Arcade)
Contra (NES)
Contra (MSX)
Super Contra (Arcade)
Super C (NES)
Operation C (Game Boy)
Contra III: The Alien Wars (SNES)
Contra: The Alien Wars (Game Boy)
Contra Advance: The Alien Wars EX (GBA)
Contra ReBirth (Wii Ware)
Contra 4 (Nintendo DS)

The Many Playstyles of Contra

One of the iconic elements of the Contra series is its various gameplay styles. Let's look back at the many different ways you fight aliens throughout the series.

Contra new screen, new strategies

One of the most memorable features of the Contra series is its change in scrolling direction or viewpoint with each stage or section. This means players must stay on their toes, as a new level or section may require new techniques and strategies. This constant switching-up of gameplay styles creates a thrilling experience for the player. In addition, a change in perspective means a change in presentation. These games make full use of the advantages of each perspective, creating unexpected and shocking new surprises for the player. Here, we'll take a look at the various gameplay styles found throughout the contra series. It is safe to say that only the most hardcore (or, should we say, Hard Corps?) Contra fans will have experienced all of these playstyles for themselves, as different installments use a combination of different styles.

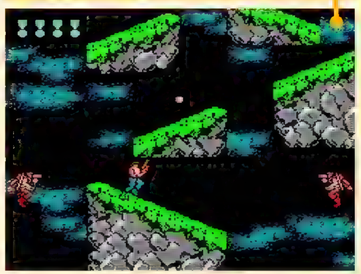
Side view, side-scrolling

(Included in all titles excluding Neo Contra)

▲This perspective is the standard for Contra games. It goes without saying that, unless this perspective is used as the basis for most of the game, the switch to other screens would not seem as thrilling or surprising. While this screen generally scrolls horizontally, later installments would add vertical scrolling into the mix.

Side view, vertical scrolling

(Included in all titles except Neo Contra)



▲The switch between side view side scrolling and side view vertical scrolling happened by level in the first installment of the Contra series. Starting with Super C, however, the change in scrolling direction takes place seamlessly within the same level. This method became the norm for the series from then on.

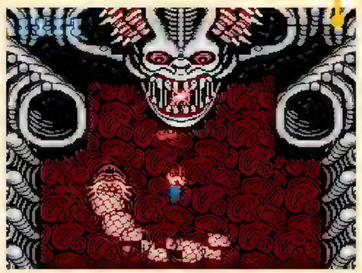
Pseudo-3D perspective

(Included in Contra, Contra 4, etc.)

▲The use of this pseudo-3D perspective was groundbreaking at the time, as not many considered that 2D and 3D perspectives could be used together in the same game. While this perspective was only used for the interior of fortresses in the first Contra, it was used in later installments to give the games a dynamic and epic feel.

Top-down perspective, vertical scrolling

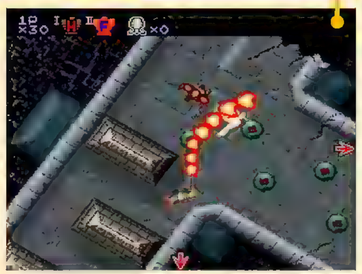
(Included in Super Contra, Operation C, etc.)



▲This perspective was introduced to the Contra series in the arcade title Super Contra. Commonly seen in vertical scrolling shooter games, this gameplay style requires a drastically different skill-set from playing in side view. As a side note, the same power-up items and weapons found in side view stages can also be used in these stages.

Top-down perspective, multi-directional scrolling

(Included in Contra III: The Alien Wars)



▲This gameplay style took full advantage of the SNES' ability to zoom-in, zoom-out, and rotate backgrounds, which was one of its selling points. Although this playstyle was only used for the SNES title Contra III: The Alien Wars, the lasting impact it had on players makes it a must-include when talking about the various gameplay styles of the Contra series.

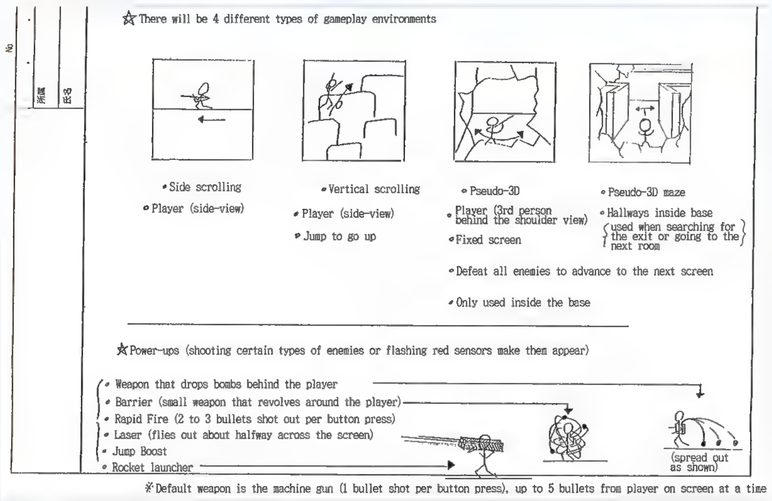
High speed scrolling

(Included in Contra III: The Alien Wars)

▲This gameplay style was used mostly for vehicle sections. Although it uses the same perspective as the side view side scrolling screens, the fact that the screen auto-scrolls gives the gameplay a completely different feel. First introduced in Contra III: The Alien Wars on the SNES, it has since been used in many installments.

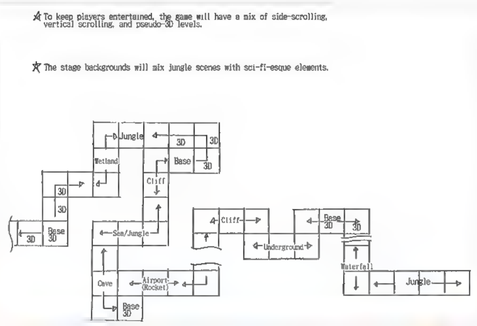
Contra fans, you're in for a treat: shown here are rare material, such as design documents and sketches, which were actually used at the time by the development team during the creation of each title.

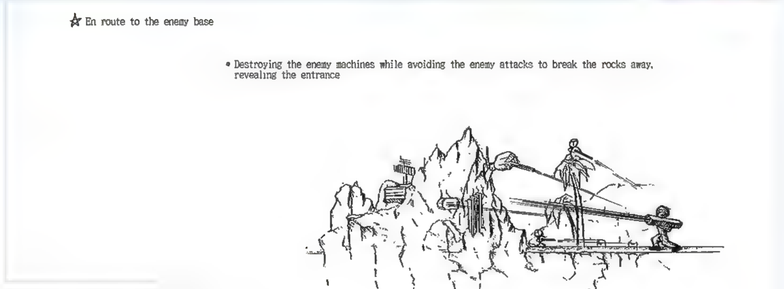
※Since the documents shown here were used at the time of production, there may be some differences from the contents of the released installment.


☆There will be 4 different types of gameplay environments
・Side scrolling
・Player (side-view)
・Vertical scrolling
・Player (side-view)
・Jump to go up
・Pseudo-3D
・Player (3rd person behind the shoulder view)
・Fixed screen
・Pseudo-3D maze
・Hallways inside base (used when searching for the exit or going to the next room)
・Defeat all enemies to advance to the next screen
・Only used inside the base
☆Power-ups (shooting certain types of enemies or flashing red sensors make them appear)
・Weapon that drops bombs behind the player
・Barrier (small weapon that revolves around the player)
・Rapid Fire (2 to 3 bullets shot out per button press)
・Laser (flies out about halfway across the screen)
・Jump Boost
・Rocket launcher
(spread out as shown)
※Default weapon is the machine gun (1 bullet shot per button press), up to 5 bullets from player on screen at a time

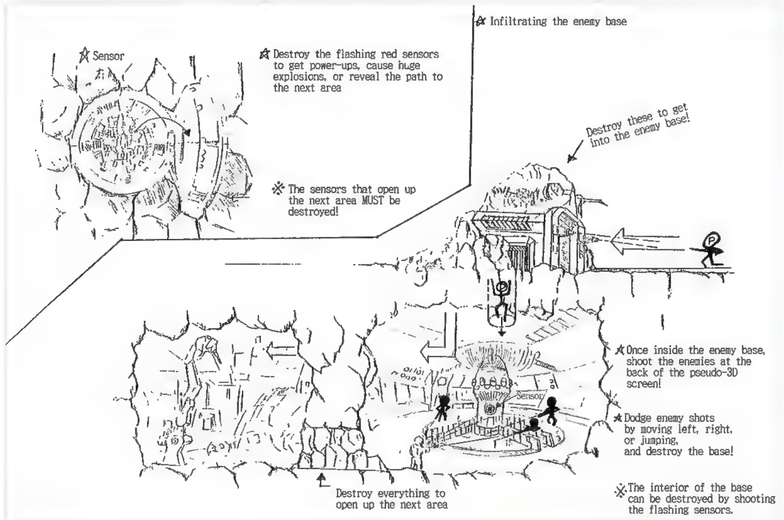
▲The first draft of the design document for the arcade version of Contra can be seen above. It details the four different kinds of screens that change as the game progresses: side-scrolling, vertical scrolling, pseudo-3D and pseudo-3D maze. Even at this stage of development, the core framework of the game was firmly in place. Proposed concepts for power-up items include a weapon that drops bombs behind the player, Barrier, Rapid Fire, Laser, Jump Boost, and Rocket Launcher.

▶Shown here is an example of the stage layout. A variety of different screen types such as side-scrolling, vertical scrolling and pseudo-3D are combined to create a stage that keeps players on their toes. It includes notes proposing a background design that combines both jungle and sci-fi.

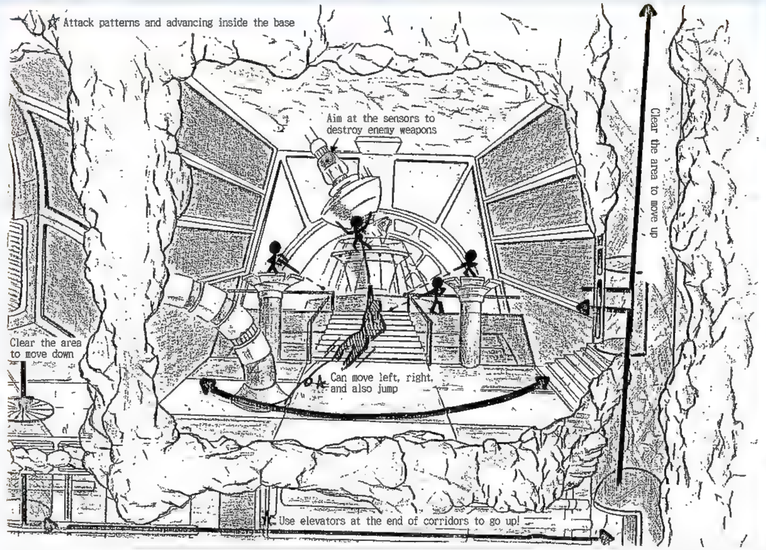



☆En route to the enemy base
・Destroying the enemy machines while avoiding the enemy attacks to break the rocks away, revealing the entrance
Entering the enemy base

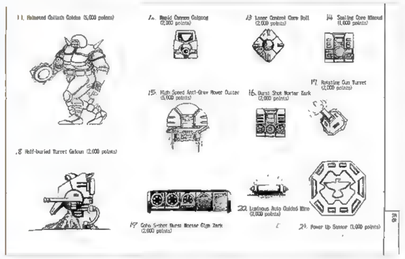
▶This rough sketch depicts the playable character destroying the enemy weaponry to infiltrate the base. The design documents suggest that at this stage in development the screen would scroll to the left.


☆Infiltrating the enemy base
☆Sensor
☆Destroy the flashing red sensors to get power-ups, cause huge explosions, or reveal the path to the next area
※The sensors that open up the next area MUST be destroyed!
Destroy these to get into the enemy base!
☆Once inside the enemy base, shoot the enemies at the back of the pseudo-3D screen!
Sensor
☆Dodge enemy shots by moving left, right, or jumping, and destroy the base!
Destroy everything to open up the next area
※The interior of the base can be destroyed by shooting the flashing sensors.

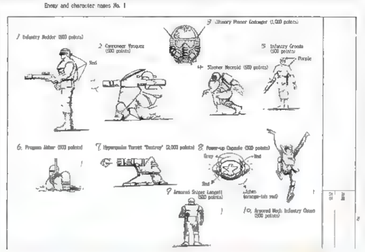
▲Another rough sketch, this time showing how destroying sensors open the corridors to the next section. Even at this stage in development, the basic concept was already firmly established: Players would move from side to side and jump to avoid enemy shots while attacking the sensors, all on a pseudo-3D screen.

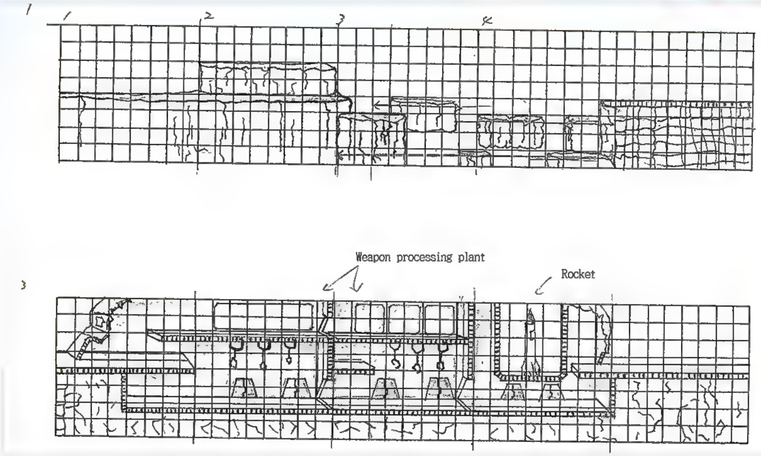

Attack patterns and advancing inside the base
Aim at the sensors to destroy enemy weapons
Clear the area to move up
Clear the area to move down
Can move left, right, and also jump
Use elevators at the end of corridors to go up!

▲A detailed sketch showing a combat situation on the pseudo-3D screen, as well as the detailed layout that must be navigated for the player to make their way through the enemy base. Elevators were considered to be escape routes out of the base.

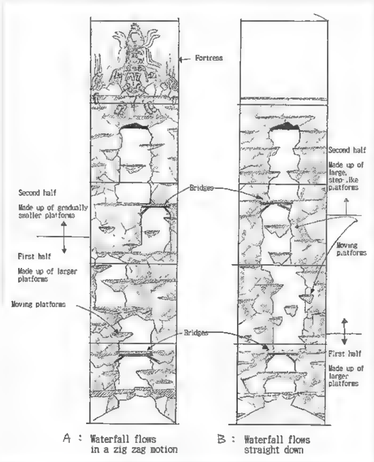


These early sketches of enemy characters have some astonishing detail.

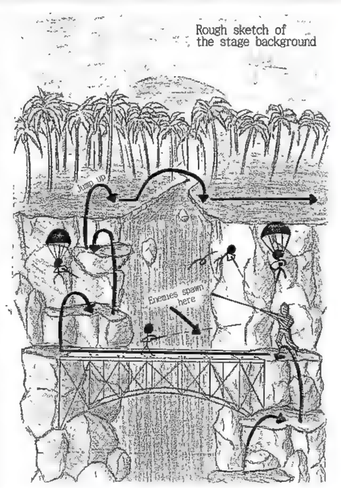




▲The layout of this stage which starts in the outdoors and ends in the weapons processing plant can be seen above. This closely resembles what would ultimately become the tundra stage in the released product.



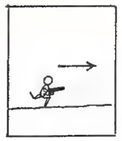
▲This layout for the waterfall stage includes a fortress waiting for the player at the top. The final product would have the waterfall cascade downward in a zig-zag motion, but as seen here there were other options being considered as well.



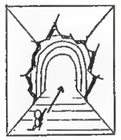
▲Players would clash with enemies as they made their way up the vertical scrolling screens. This waterfall stage would remain in the released product.

5. Screen layout (5 different types)

① Side-scrolling



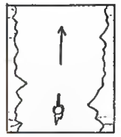
④ Pseudo-3D screen (demo)



② Vertical scrolling

⑤ Fixed screen

③ Top-down view



▲The first draft of the design document for Super Contra can be seen above.

7. Cut-scene

①Prologue, demo

Cut between multiple action shots showcasing the Contra special forces, e.g. them rappelling down out of a helicopter.
Add English voiceovers, which will be displayed as translated subtitles.

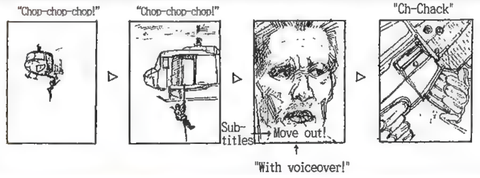
⇦ Scroll

Screen

The Contra are back in action!!

Black White or red

↑ Show sentences like this one.
↓ Switch between action shots after.



▲This rough sketch outlines the intro cutscene for the game. The exciting, movie trailer-esque cutscene used in the game was based on this.

◎ Player power-up items

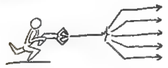
・Gatling Gun

・Homing Missiles

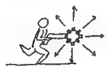
・Spiraling Burst Fire Gun

・Dimensional Wave Canpon
(blows away all enemies ahead, no rapid fire)

・Spread Shot

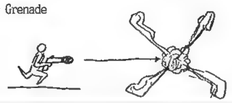


・8-way Shot



・Plasma Laser (branching)

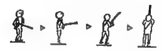
・Grenade

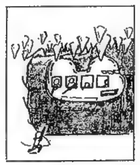


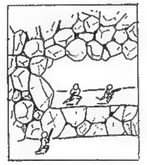
▲Proposals for power-up items from the early stages of development. While there were eight weapons proposed in total (Gatling Gun, Spiraling Burst Gun, Spread Shot, Plasma Laser, Homing Missiles, Dimensional Wave Blaster, 8 Way Shot, and Grenade), only five would make it into the final product, meaning it had the same number of weapons as the previous installment.

10. Other ideas

☆ To create the illusion of depth (3D effects) on side view screens, have the player character turn their back to the screen when aiming up.
Shot trajectory will be the same as before.
This allows enemies to seem like they are in the background.

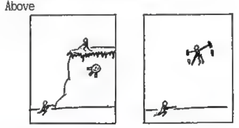






☆ Set enemies to a certain height

Above



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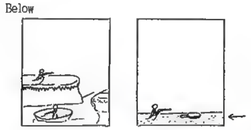


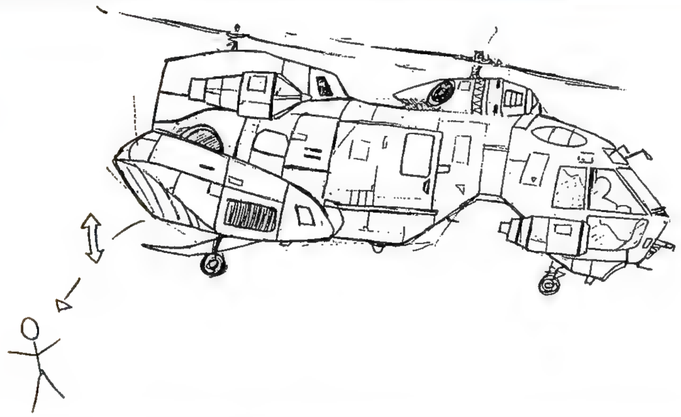
Rumble, rumble

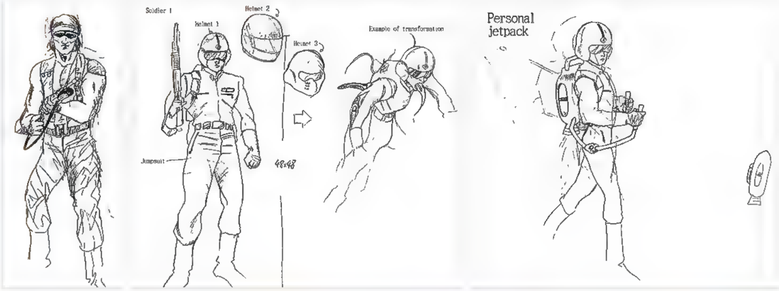
Rumble, rumble

Bonk!

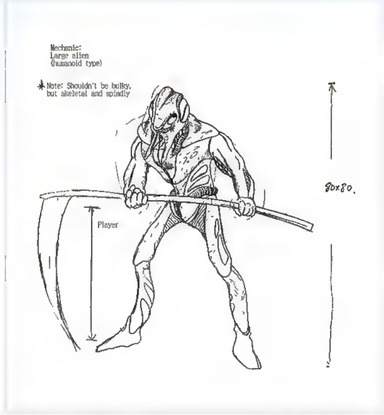
▲There were concepts on how enemies could attack from the background, above, and below on side-view screens. This presentation made full use of the “taller” screen aspect ratio used in the Arcade edition.

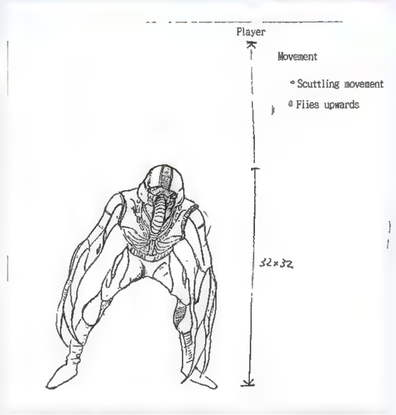
◀▼These rough sketches of vehicles in the game include actual "human" character size for scale. This ensured that the size of these vehicles in-game would seem more realistic.

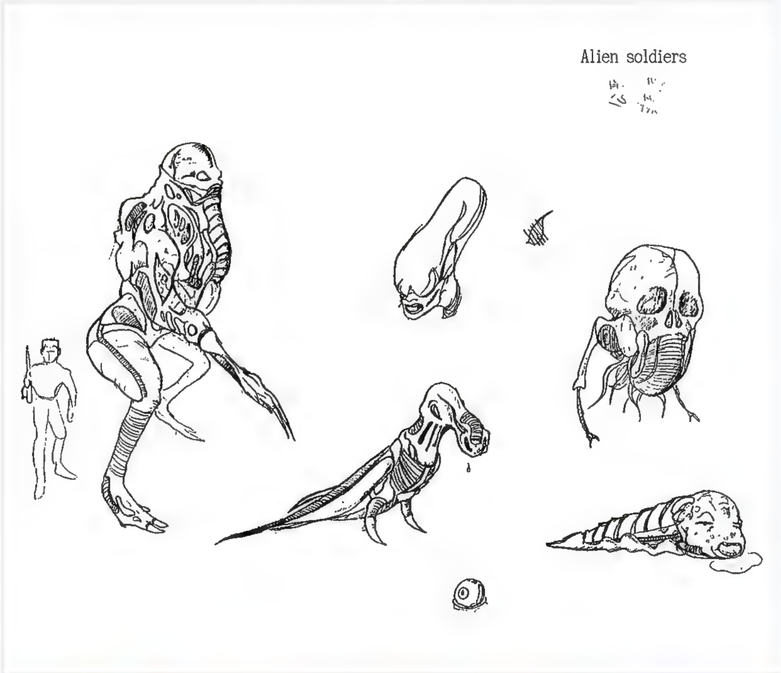




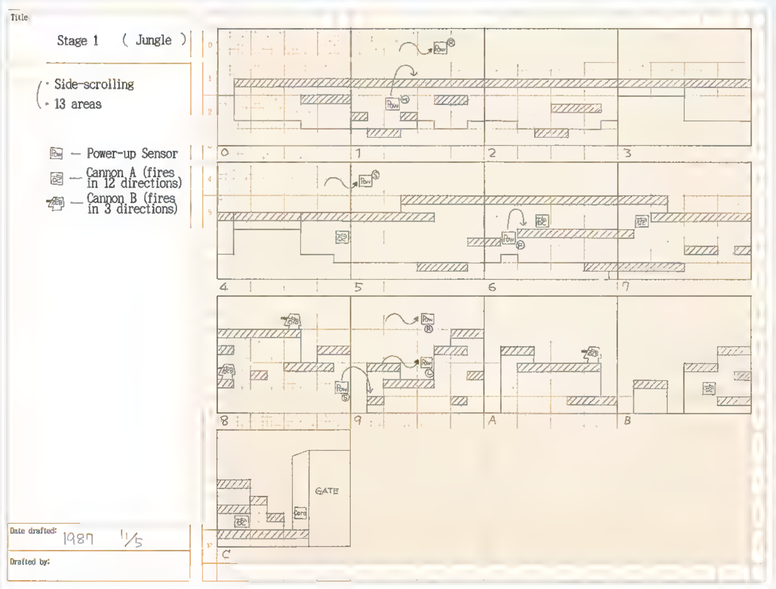
▲Rough sketches of human type enemies in the game. Many different variations were planned: from guerilla grunts, to futuristic troopers, and even jetpack soldiers.



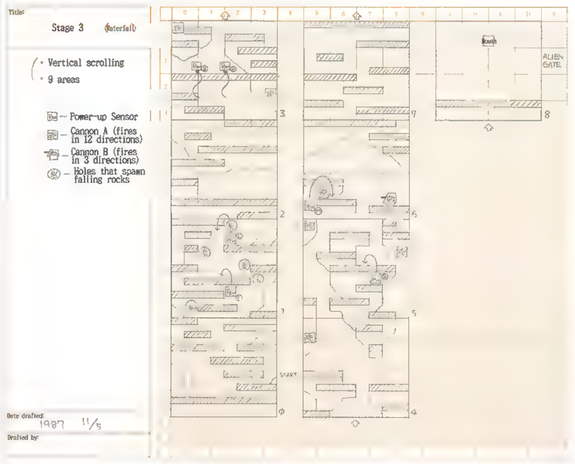




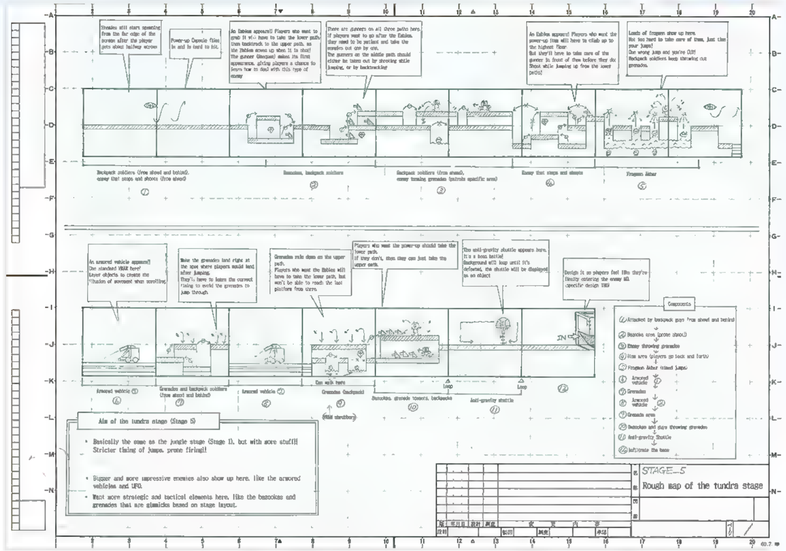
▲Shown above is the rough sketch of the alien type enemies. Big, small, humanoid, non-humanoid; they came in all sizes and shapes, literally!



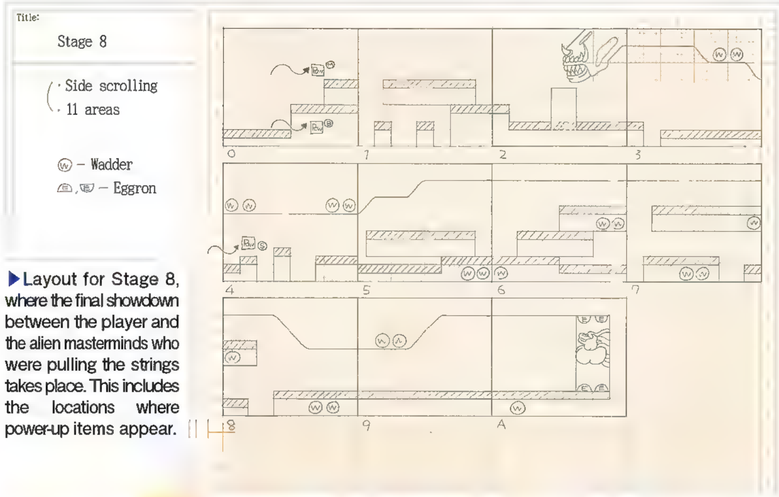
▲Layout for Stage 1, re-designed from the ground up for the home console port. While its basic layout remains the same as that of the arcade edition, the distance to the base entrance was made longer.



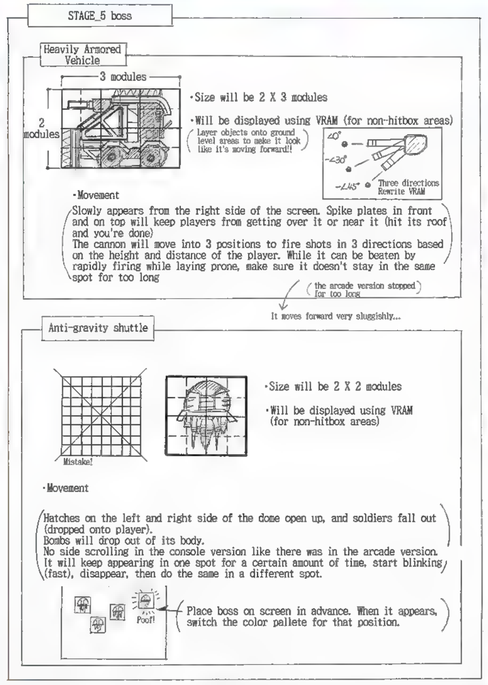
◀Layout for the vertical scrolling Stage 3. As with Stage 1, the distance to the fortress was made longer in the console edition compared to the arcade edition, meaning there is plenty more to go through in this level.



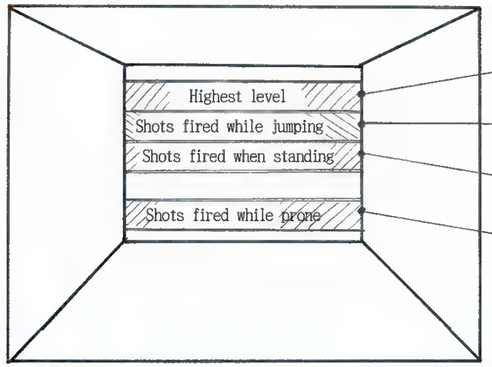
▲Layout for the tundra-based Stage 5. Due to the vast differences in enemy appearance patterns between the home console and the arcade edition, the enemy locations are covered in great detail.



▶Layout for Stage 8, where the final showdown between the player and the alien masterminds who were pulling the strings takes place. This includes the locations where power-up items appear.


STAGE_5 boss
Heavily Armored Vehicle
3 modules
2 modules
・Size will be 2 X 3 modules
・Will be displayed using VRAM (for non-hitbox areas)
(Layer objects onto ground level areas to make it look like it's moving forward!!)
40°
-30°
-145°
Three directions Rewrite VRAM
・Movement
(Slowly appears from the right side of the screen. Spike plates in front and on top will keep players from getting over it or near it (hit its roof and you're done)
The cannon will move into 3 positions to fire shots in 3 directions based on the height and distance of the player. While it can be beaten by rapidly firing while laying prone, make sure it doesn't stay in the same spot for too long
(the arcade version stopped for too long)
It moves forward very sluggishly...
Anti-gravity shuttle
Mistake!
・Size will be 2 X 2 modules
・Will be displayed using VRAM (for non-hitbox areas)
・Movement
(Hatches on the left and right side of the dome open up, and soldiers fall out (dropped onto player).
Bombs will drop out of its body.
No side scrolling in the console version like there was in the arcade version.
It will keep appearing in one spot for a certain amount of time, start blinking (fast), disappear, then do the same in a different spot.
Poof!
Place boss on screen in advance. When it appears, switch the color pallete for that position.

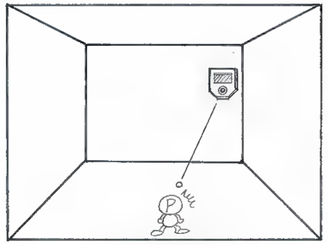
◀Spec document for a larger enemy that appears in Stage 5. Due to the differences in attack and movement patterns between the home console and arcade edition, each and every detail of its actions are thoroughly detailed.


Highest level
Shots fired while jumping
Shots fired when standing
Shots fired while prone
Peak of jump
Shots fired while jumping
Shots fired when standing
Shots fired while prone on the ground

▼Settings for player attack and jump heights in the pseudo-3D stages. They are divided into four levels based on player location and stance.

Enemies in STAGE_2, 4

Wall Turrets (stationary enemy)



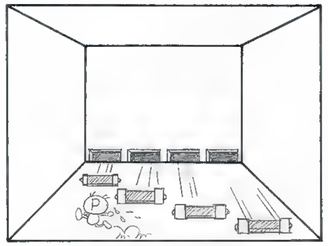
These will be attached to the walls. There will be a cover on it at first, which is automatically removed when moving enemies appear.

※
Must destroy all wall turrets to reveal the core.

Once its cover is off, will periodically fire single shots at the player.
The height of its bullets will be constant (standing height).

(Positioning)
(Should be in positions where the player has to fire while jumping, or with barricades (walls) in front of it so it takes double the effort to handle, or on the left and right sides with some distance between them so players have to go back and forth.
(Maybe even top and bottom?)

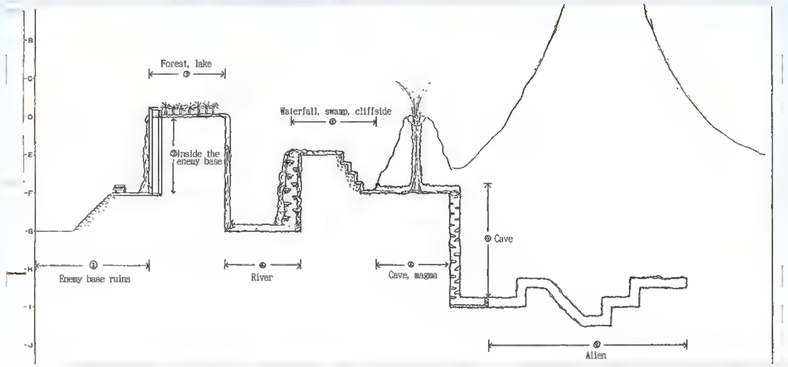
Mines (Capsule)



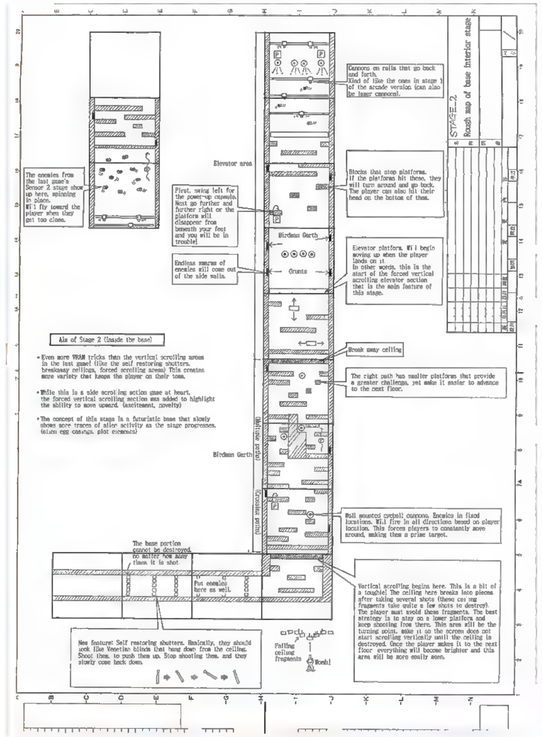
They keep rolling, rolling, rolling on the floor... Weird capsules keep rolling from behind the wall.
They pose little threat by themselves, you just have to jump over them. Combining them with enemy shots is what makes things interesting.
Six shots fired while Laying prone is enough to destroy them, so staying prone in the same spot is one way to do it.
They should be a little faster than in the arcade version, so you can get a good rhythm going when you hop over them!!

(How they appear)
(Have them quickly pop out in order from the left (or the right) side, as shown in the drawing above, and the player will likely dodge them with zig zagging hops.
It could be "interesting" if they gauge player position and only pop out when their coordinates match (almost like they're targeting them).
Combining them with enemies at standard height would be best.
(Keep them on their toes, always switching from crouched to standing)
(Make the player constantly move, jump up, drop down, then fire!)

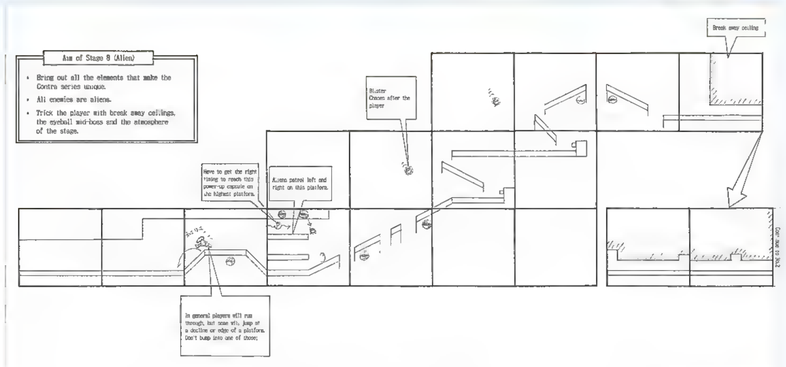
▲Specification document for the Wall Turret and Mines which appear on the pseudo-3D stages. While these were also present in the arcade edition, minor alterations to their attack patterns and methods of dealing with them in the home console edition are listed here.



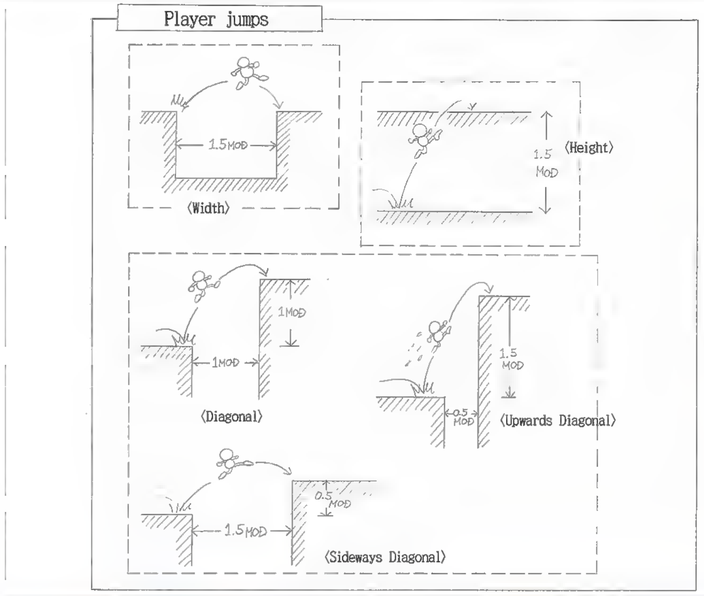
▲Rough sketch of the elevation differences between all of the stages in Super C for the NES. When seen all at once, it truly shows the variety in highs and lows between each Stage.


Rough map of base interior stage
Elevator area
Birdman Garth
Grunts
Break away ceiling
Wall mounted cyeball cannons. Encmies in fixed locations. Will fire in all directions based on player location. This forces players to constantly move around, making them a grisar target.
Vertical scrolling begins here. This is a bit of a trouble! The ceiling here breaks into pieces after taking several shots (these can veg fragments take quite a few shots to destroy). The player must avoid these fragments. The best strategy is to stay on a lower platform and keep shooting from there. This area will be the turning point, make it so the screen does not start scrolling vertically until the ceiling is destroyed. Once the player makes it to the next floor everything will become brighter and this area will be more easily seen.
Falling ceiling fragments
Bomb!

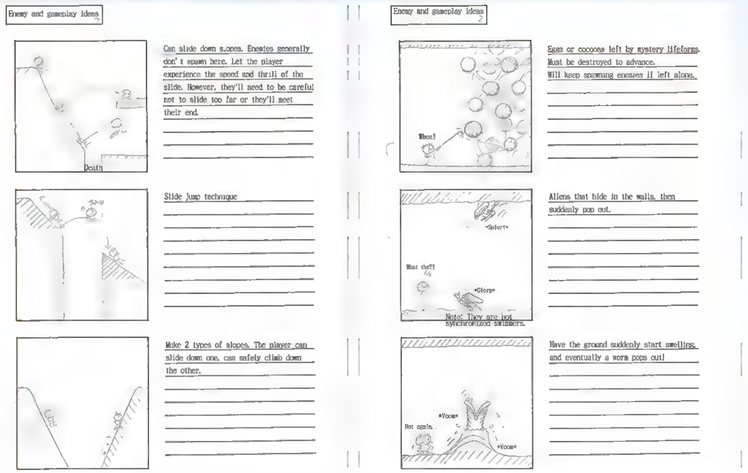
◀The layout for Stage 2 at the time of development. This is the stage where players would climb upward along the cliffside enemy base. At this point in time, the plan was to have this vertically scrolling screen be one that was viewed from the side; in the released product, however, this would ultimately use the same top-down view as the arcade edition.


Break away ceiling
Blaster Chasers after the player
Have to get the right timing to reach this power-up capsule on the highest platform.
Aliens patrol left and right on this platform.
In general players will run through, but some wil jump of a decline or edge of a platform. Don't bump into one of those;

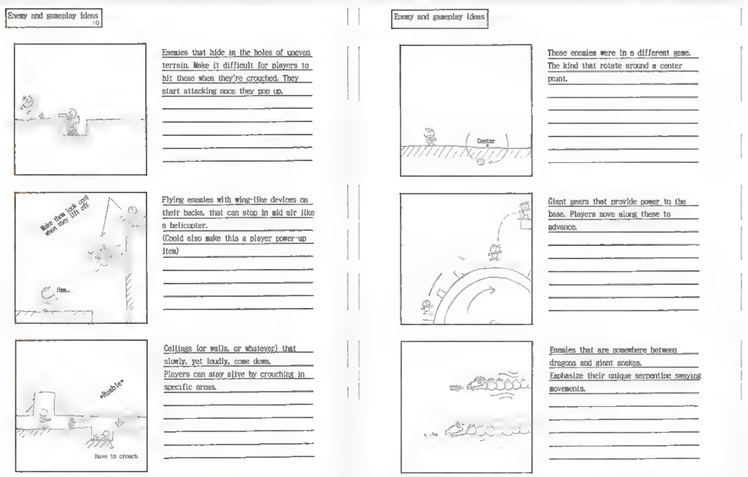
▲Layout for Stage 8 at the time of development. This stage was a new addition to the NES edition, but would end up vastly different from the layout shown above in the released product.



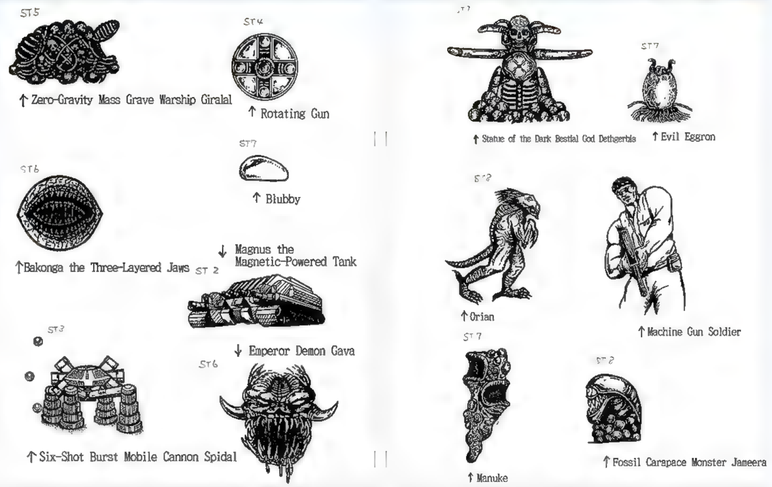
▲Spec document covering the details of player jump distances and heights. The numerous and sharp changes in elevation in this game meant there were many more areas where the player could fall to their doom; it made learning how to jump all the more important.


Enemy and gameplay ideas
Can slide down slopes. Enemies generally don't spawn here. Let the player experience the speed and thrill of the slide. However, they'll need to be careful not to slide too far or they'll meet their end.
Death
Slide jump technique
Make 2 types of slopes. The player can slide down one, can safely climb down the other.
Enemy and gameplay ideas
Eggs or cocoons left by mystery lifeforms. Must be destroyed to advance. Will keep spawning enemies if left alone.
Whoa!
Aliens that hide in the walls, then suddenly pop out.
Have the ground suddenly start smelting, and eventually a worm pops out!

▲Concepts for obstacles to stop the player. Some were ideas which incorporated differences in elevation. Since it is already known from the start of this game that the enemies are aliens, there was more freedom and variety in regards to when and how they would spawn.


Enemy and gameplay ideas
Enemies that hide in the holes of uneven terrain. Make it difficult for players to hit these when they're crouched. They start attacking once they pop up.
Flying enemies with wing-like devices on their backs, that can stop in mid air like a helicopter. (Could also make this a player power-up item)
Ceilings (or walls, or whatever) that slowly, yet loudly, come down. Players can stay alive by crouching in specific areas.
Have to crouch
Enemy and gameplay ideas
These enemies were in a different game. The kind that rotate around a center point.
Center
Giant gears that provide power to the base. Players move along these to advance.
Enemies that are somewhere between dragons and giant snakes. Emphasize their unique serpentine swaying movements.

▲Sadly, many of these concepts from the early planning documents did not make the final cut. However, the "crushing ceiling" idea did find its way into the final stage.



▲Some rough sketches of enemy designs. Super C saw the appearance of many new characters not present in the arcade edition.

List of enemies

STAGE: 1

Name	Basic actions	Health	Points
Soldier	Appears on left or right side and runs across the screen. Will jump at height differences.		
Single shot soldier	Appears on left or right side and runs across the screen. Stops at set intervals to shoot at the player (single shot).		
Machine gun soldier	Stands still with gun aimed. Fires shots at set intervals (3 shot bursts).		
Sandbag soldier	Lays prone. Fires shots at set intervals (2 shot bursts).		
Grenade soldier	Crouched down. Throws grenades at set intervals.		
Ball cannon	Fires shots while moving back and forth along a rail.		
Tank	Emerges from the ground and slowly advances. Soldier fires shots from the tank hatch.		
Pop up cannon	Cannon that pops up from the ground and shoots.		

List of enemies

STAGE: 5

Name	Basic actions	Health	Points
Face bag	Appears from above to slowly advance. Some may periodically spit bullets.		
Mouth scooter	Appears from the ground near the player. Opens up its big mouth.		
Big head	Suddenly appears from above and spins around player.		
Ladybugs	Appear from WHAM seats on either side, walking in straight lines.		
Boss	A series of mouths that open and close. The real boss appears when they are destroyed.		
Boss	The head spits out flies from its mouth. The dragons on either side stretch out toward the player.		
Flies	Chase after the player.		

▲Tables which covered enemy character movement and attack patterns. Many of these enemies had unique patterns of movement and action, making them tough to deal with until they were learned.

1. Concept

Take the run-and-gun fun of Contra to the next level by fully utilizing the power of the SFX Chip to create epic boss battles and flashy weapon upgrades.

In addition to gameplay elements from previous installments, new actions such as firing while hanging down or the spin shot will be added to create a more fluid and dynamic experience.

Make the game friendlier for newcomers to the series by including difficulty settings and the ability to stock up on weapons and items.

Include top-down view stages that use the SFX chip's ability to rotate and zoom-in/out of background images.

2. Story

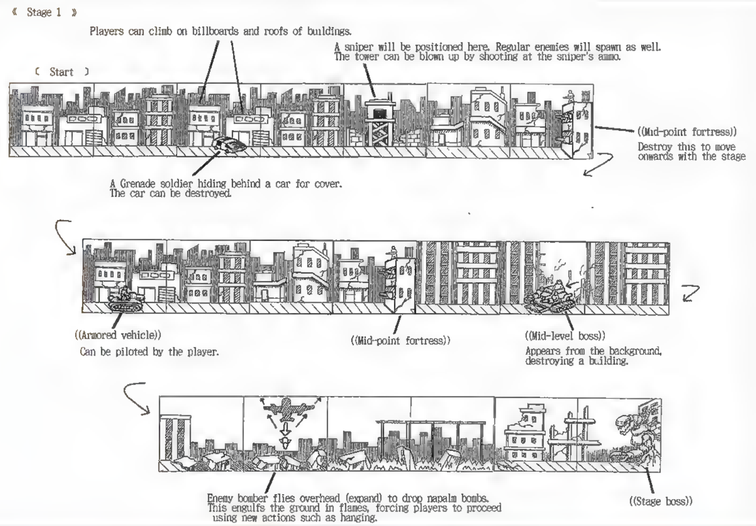
A.D. 2636

After being defeated countless times by the Contra, the Red Falcon mobilized its entire army for a full-scale invasion of Earth.
Nation by nation, humanity fell to the alien forces who possessed superior technology and vastly outnumbered the humans.

...Earth was decimated by the Red Falcon in less than half a year, and humanity now suffers under its oppression. However, all hope is not lost.

Two soldiers walk the desolate streets of a city reduced to rubble. The flames of vengeance burn in their eyes, with guns ready to be fired at any alien in sight. Bill and Lance are back, to free mankind and crush the Red Falcon once and for all!

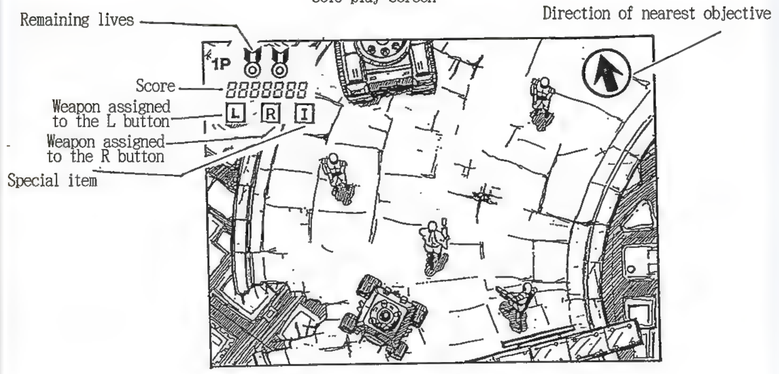
◀Here are the story and basic design philosophy of "Contra III: The Alien Wars." Making the game accessible to new players was an important facet of the game's design.


《 Stage 1 》
Players can climb on billboards and roofs of buildings.
A sniper will be positioned here. Regular enemies will spawn as well.
The tower can be blown up by shooting at the sniper's ammo.
(Start)
((Mid-point fortress))
Destroy this to move onwards with the stage
A Grenade soldier hiding behind a car for cover.
The car can be destroyed.
((Armored vehicle))
Can be piloted by the player.
((Mid-point fortress))
((Mid-level boss))
Appears from the background, destroying a building.
Enemy bomber flies overhead (expand) to drop napalm bombs.
This engulfs the ground in flames, forcing players to proceed using new actions such as hanging.
((Stage boss))

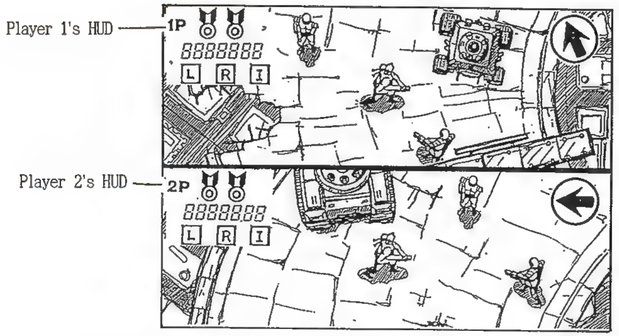
▲Above is the layout of Stage 1. The stage itself is a basic side scrolling stage. However, it also serves as a tutorial for the game by integrating areas where new gameplay features such hanging must be used.

<TOP VIEW>

Solo play screen



Co-op play screen



＊Background will rotate and scroll around the player when playing in top-down view.

＊Player direction can be switched between up and right with the Select button.

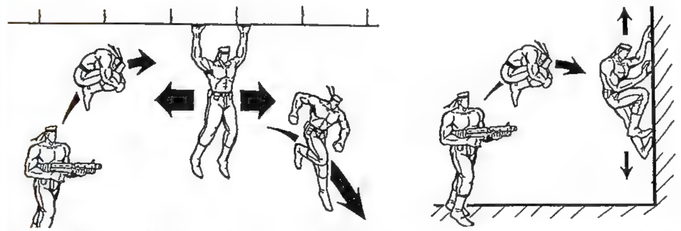
- 4 -

▲These are pieces of concept art for the top-down view stages in which players explore the map by rotating the screen.

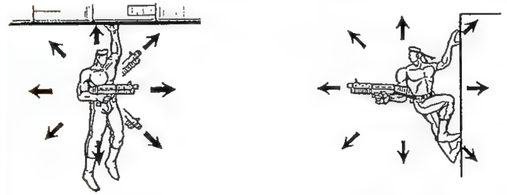
◎ Other actions

"Hanging down"

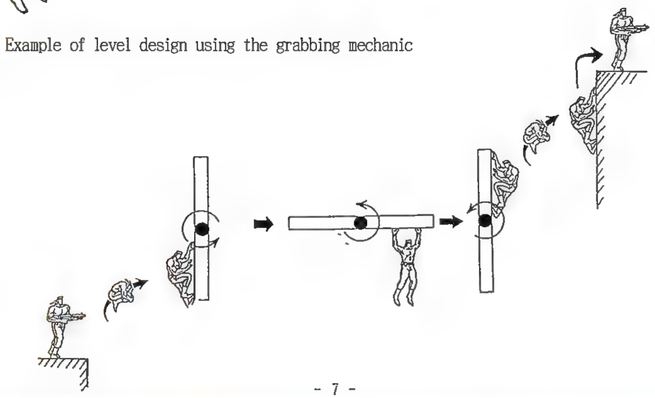
Players can grab onto ceilings or walls by pressing the jump button and a direction on the D-pad.
While grabbed on, players can climb along ceilings or walls by pressing a direction on the D-pad.



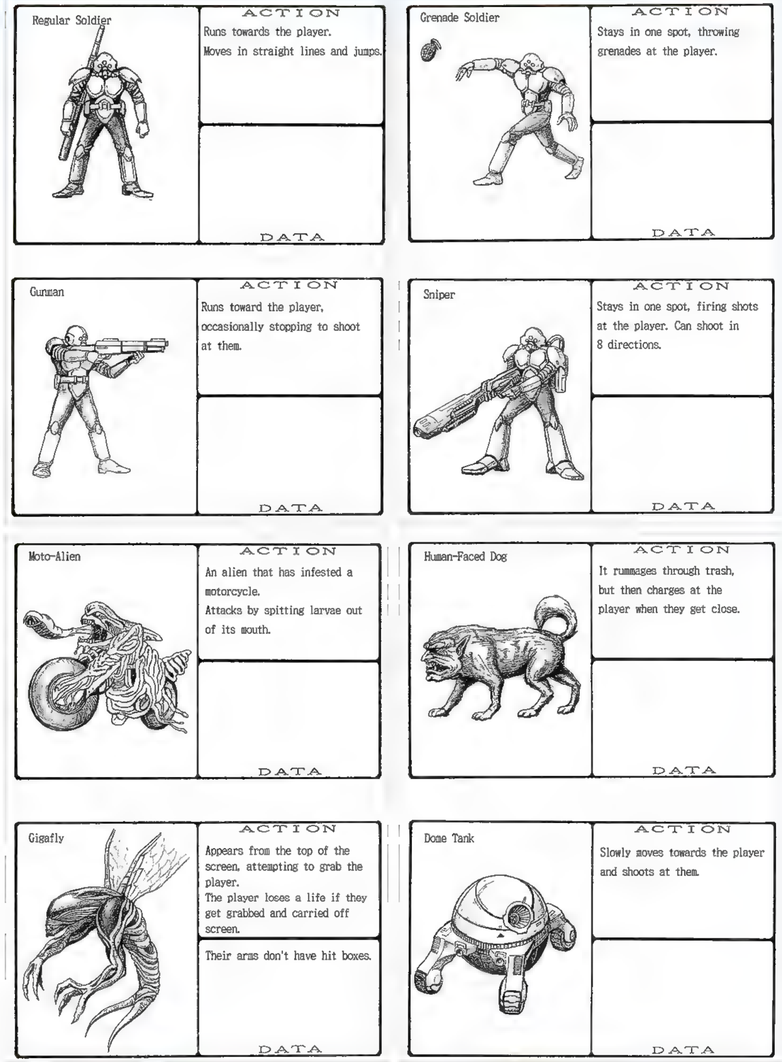
While grabbed on, players can fire in eight directions (cannot move while firing).



Example of level design using the grabbing mechanic



▲Here are details for the player character's ability to grab on to walls or ceilings, as well as stage gimmicks that make use of these abilities. In particular, hanging down from rotating bars was used in many stages and boss battles.



▲This is the concept art for various enemies in Contra III: The Alien Wars, as well as their attack patterns.

◇ CONCEPT ◇

As with the original Contra, we are aiming to create a fast-paced game with rewarding run-and-gun action. Set it apart from the original game in terms of level design and bosses, but with no major changes to the fundamental gameplay of the original.

◇ STORY ◇

Red Falcon's invasions were prevented two times over by the Contra soldiers. However, Earth was still in danger...

An evil superpower hungry for world domination was secretly collecting data on the war between the Contra soldiers and the Red Falcon for its horrifying scheme.

The plan is to use the data it collected to create an ultimate weapon for the battles to come. In other words, they intended to militarize and weaponize lab-grown alien lifeforms.

Currently, they are using seized alien carcasses to attempt to produce alien clones, deep within their secret military base located on an island in the South Pacific... and their hideous experiments are nearing completion.

Learning of this, leaders of the Earth Federation assigned Bill to a secret mission. Lance, his brother in arms who helped him to defeat the aliens twice, is on a separate mission in the evil nation.

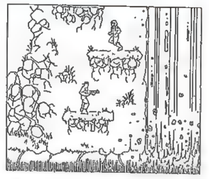
"You're on your own to infiltrate the research facility, Bill! Will he be able to foil the evil nation's dastardly plans all alone?"

▲Here are the story and basic design philosophy of Operation C. Since this installment is a single-player experience, Bill Rizer is the only playable character.

AREA3. . . Jungle

Side view with side and vertical scrolling

Run through the jungle in the side scrolling areas, then climb up the cliffside in the vertical scrolling area. There will be soldiers popping up out of the water, as well as falling boulders.



Enemies

Underground Turrets
Snipers
Boulders
Floating Platforms
Rotating Turrets
Underwater Soldiers

Mid-level boss

Anti-gravity Assault Vehicle (Upper Unit)

Boss

Anti-gravity Assault Vehicle

AREA4. . . Base interior, disposal site of aliens within the caves

Top-down view with vertical scrolling

Abominations created from failed experiments attack the player. Tentacles stretch out from both walls.

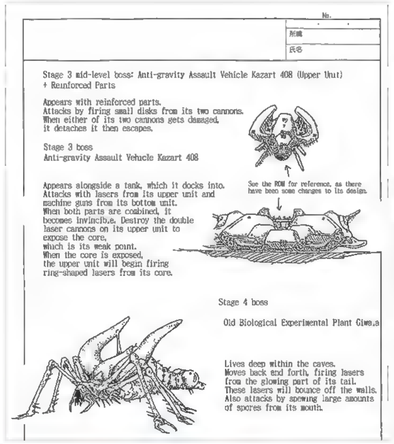
Enemies

Alien Grunts
~~Plants Infested by Aliens~~
Insects Infested by Aliens
Alien Eggs
etc.

Boss

Mid-level boss

◀These are rough sketches for some of the later stages. The game switches between side-scrolling and top-down gameplay from stage to stage.



Stage 3 mid-level boss: Anti-gravity Assault Vehicle Kazart 408 (Upper Unit)
+ Reinforced Parts

Appears with reinforced parts.
Attacks by firing small disks from its two cannons.
When either of its two cannons gets damaged, it detaches it then escapes.

Stage 3 boss
Anti-gravity Assault Vehicle Kazart 408

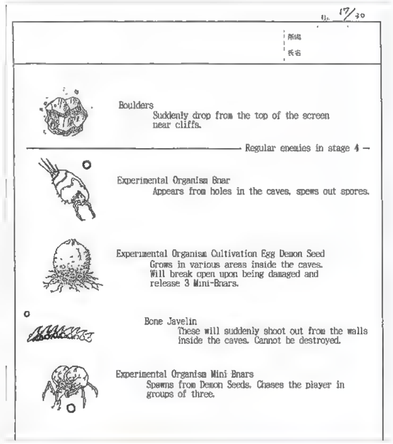
Appears alongside a tank, which it docks into. Attacks with lasers from its upper unit and machine guns from its bottom unit.
When both parts are combined, it becomes invincible. Destroy the double laser cannons on its upper unit to expose the core, which is its weak point.
When the core is exposed, the upper unit will begin firing ring-shaped lasers from its core.

See the ROM for reference, as there have been some changes to its design.

Stage 4 boss

Old Biological Experimental Plant Glwa,a

Lives deep within the caves.
Moves back and forth, firing lasers from the glowing part of its tail.
These lasers will bounce off the walls.
Also attacks by spewing large amounts of spores from its mouth.



Boulders
Suddenly drop from the top of the screen near cliffs.

Regular enemies in stage 4

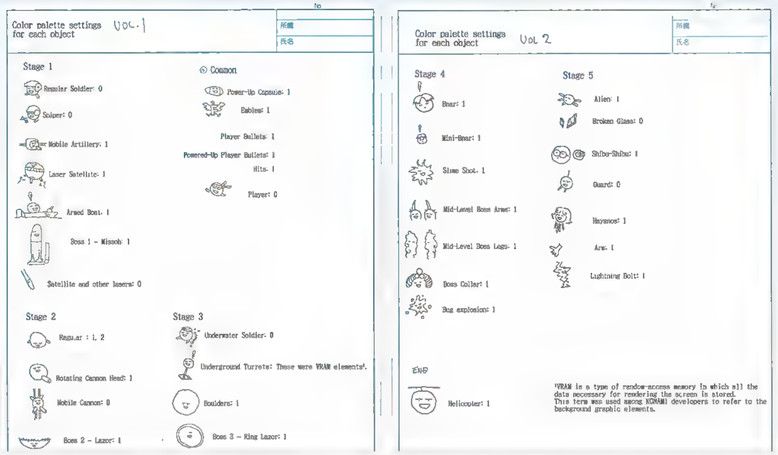
Experimental Organism Gnar
Appears from holes in the caves, spews out spores.

Experimental Organism Cultivation Egg Demon Seed
Grows in various areas inside the caves.
Will break open upon being damaged and release 3 Mini-Gnars.

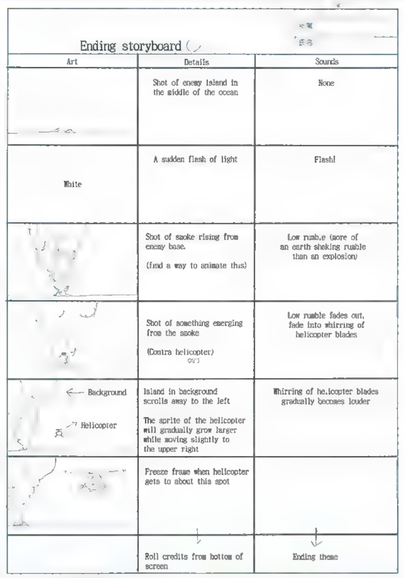
Bone Javelin
These will suddenly shoot out from the walls inside the caves. Cannot be destroyed.

Experimental Organism Mini Gnars
Spawns from Demon Seeds. Chases the player in groups of three.

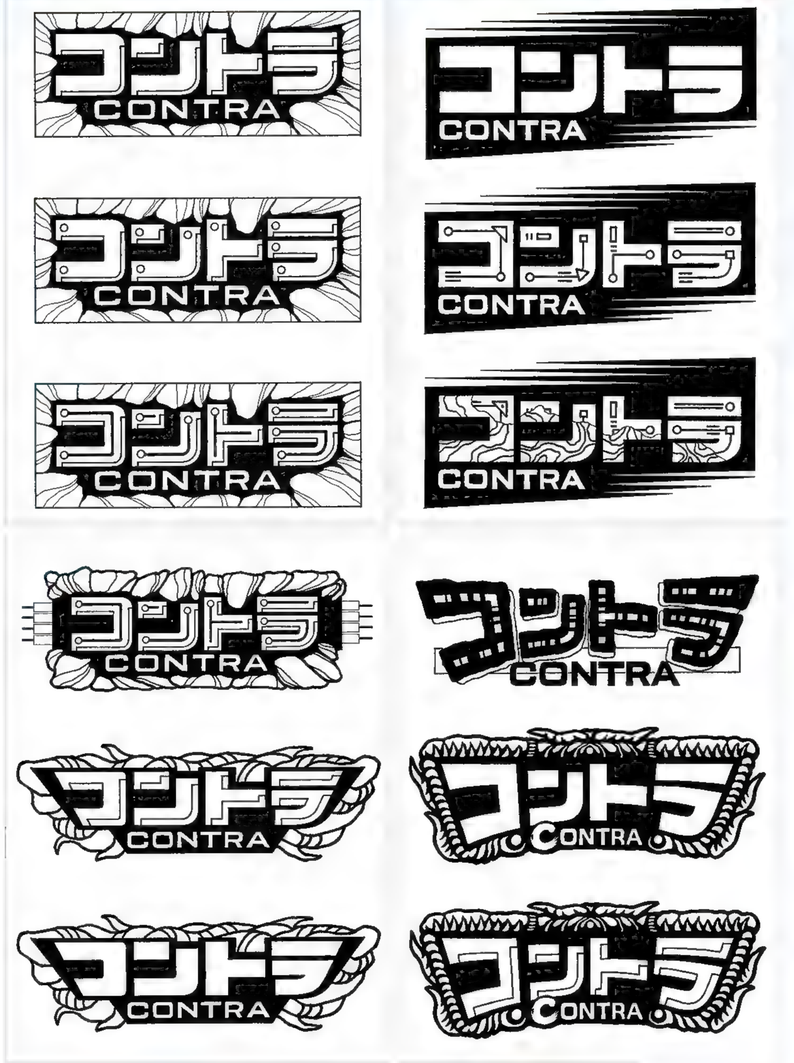
▲Above are shown some concept arts for bosses (left) and enemies (right) that appear in later stages. The designs for the creatures are highly detailed. Unfortunately, due to hardware limitations at the time, much of the detail was lost in the creatures' transition to pixels.



▲The documents above detail what color palettes should be used for which enemies. These cute, hand-drawn illustrations by development team members make the enemies seem much less frightening than they really are.


Ending storyboard
Art
Details
Sounds
Shot of enemy island in the middle of the ocean
None
White
A sudden flash of light
Flash!
Shot of smoke rising from enemy base.
(find a way to animate this)
Low rumble (more of an earth shaking rumble than an explosion)
Shot of something emerging from the smoke
(Contra helicopter)
Low rumble fades out, fade into whirring of helicopter blades
Background
Helicopter
Island in background scrolls away to the left
The sprite of the helicopter will gradually grow larger while moving slightly to the upper right
Whirring of helicopter blades gradually becomes louder
Freeze frame when helicopter gets to about this spot
Roll credits from bottom of screen
Ending theme

◀This is the storyboard for the ending cutscene. Amidst the sound of explosions and whirring helicopter blades, the ending theme fades in, creating a memorable moment.



▲Shown here are the design drafts for the Japanese logo of Operation C. The number of proposed logos outnumber those for other installments in the series. It seems as though there was much thought and care put into this game's logo.

Contra Overdrive Project

Proposal

Drafted: 12/2/1993

◀The game design document for Contra: Hard Corps. This installment was tentatively titled “Contra: Overdrive” at the early stages of development.

8、Characters

< Playable Characters >

Ray Poward

Member of the Contra Hard Corps. Born and raised among the filth and pestilence of the city's slums, Ray at one time was the leader of a group of delinquents. Recruited by Squad Leader Doyle, who picked up on his unsurpassed combat skills and superb instincts, Ray received special forces training and became a member of the Hard Corps.
His cool exterior hides a burning lust for battle.
Character with average size and health.

Sheena Etranzi

Sole female member of the Contra Hard Corps. A fierce warrior whose abilities go far beyond those suggested by her appearance. Especially skilled in guerilla tactics, in jungle combat she alone is said to be the equal of an entire squad.
Has same health and uses same types of weapons as Ray.

Brad Fang

The ultimate fighter - created using the latest in genetic engineering and cyborg technology. Always calm and collected, he is well-trusted by the members of the force. He is best at close range, hand-to-hand combat.
Slightly larger and has higher health compared to other characters.

Browny

Officially known as "Model CX-1-DA300 Combat Robot," the members of the force refer to him as "Browny" because of his warm personality.
His ability to link up with numerous data systems makes him an unsurpassed intelligence tool.
Easier to avoid enemy attacks due to its smaller size, but has lower health.

▲List of playable characters. As this was somewhat of a spin-off to the series, Bill and Lance are absent. Taking their places are four new characters, with the general concepts on how their differing abilities would set them apart already listed.

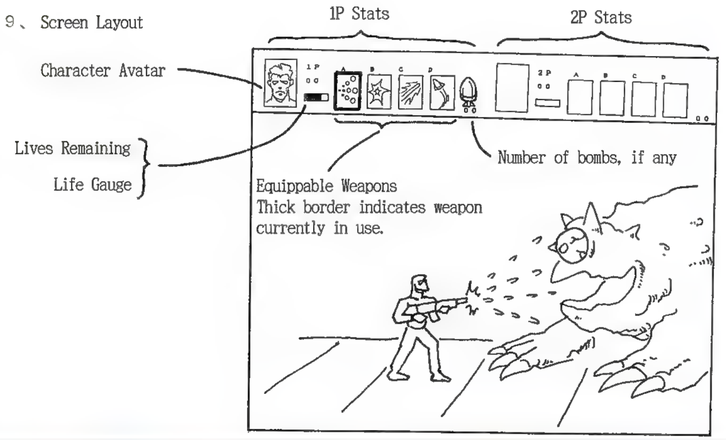
7、Game Contents

A side view action shooting game where players control the members of the Contra team to expose and prevent the schemes of an evil organization.

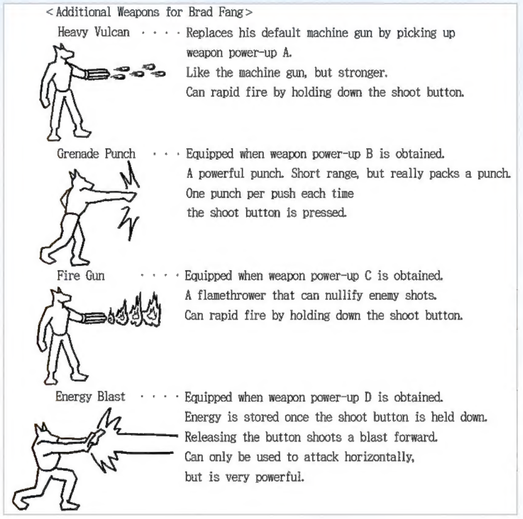
8、Game Format

Playing Format	: Solo or cooperative play.
Player Lives	: Players take damage when attacked. When enough damage is taken from enemy attacks or traps, they lose 1 l
Game Over	: At default settings, players begin the game with 3 lives. The game is over when they lose all of their lives (number of lives can be changed in the options menu).
Continuing	: When a player's game is over, they can select to "continue" their game from the beginning of the stage they were on. There will be no limit to the number of times the player can continue in the domestic release. The overseas edition will allow for 3 continues (number of continues can be changed in the options menu).
Joining Game	: An additional player can join the game during a solo session by receiving lives from the other player. In a cooperative session, the player who reaches a game over can accept lives from the surviving player to return to the game.

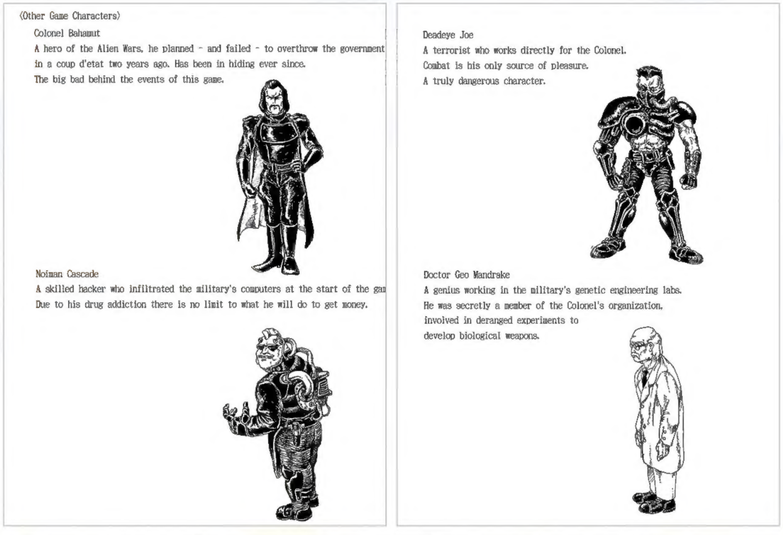
9、Screen Layout



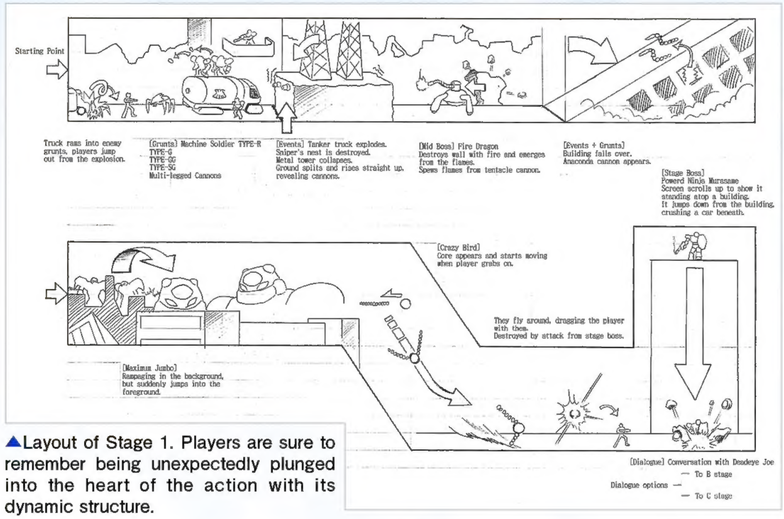
▲Run down of the contents of the game. Early plans were to differentiate between the Japanese and overseas edition through the number of continues available to players. However, this idea was scrapped in favor of giving players a life bar in the Japanese edition and sticking with the one hit, one life system for the overseas edition.


<Additional Weapons for Brad Fang>
Heavy Vulcan · · · · Replaces his default machine gun by picking up weapon power-up A.
Like the machine gun, but stronger.
Can rapid fire by holding down the shoot button.
Grenade Punch · · · Equipped when weapon power-up B is obtained.
A powerful punch. Short range, but really packs a punch.
One punch per push each time the shoot button is pressed.
Fire Gun · · · · Equipped when weapon power-up C is obtained.
A flamethrower that can nullify enemy shots.
Can rapid fire by holding down the shoot button.
Energy Blast · · · · Equipped when weapon power-up D is obtained.
Energy is stored once the shoot button is held down.
Releasing the button shoots a blast forward.
Can only be used to attack horizontally, but is very powerful.

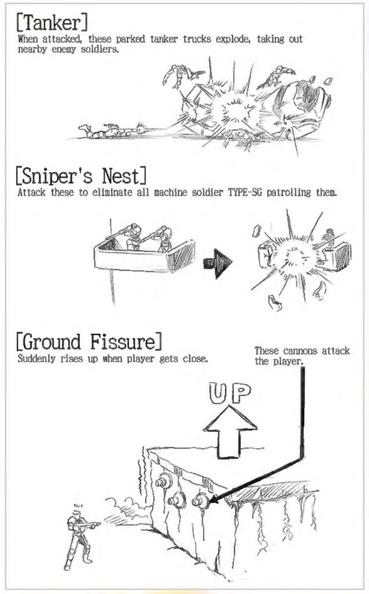
◀Different weapons used by Brad Fang. Each of the four playable characters had four types of weapons available to them, making this installment to the series stand out as having the most varied offense options.

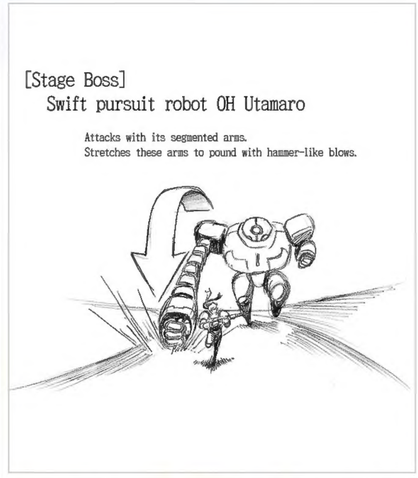

(Other Game Characters)
Colonel Bahamut
A hero of the Alien Wars, he planned - and failed - to overthrow the government in a coup d'etat two years ago. Has been in hiding ever since.
The big bad behind the events of this game.
Noiman Cascade
A skilled hacker who infiltrated the military's computers at the start of the game.
Due to his drug addiction there is no limit to what he will do to get money.
Deadeye Joe
A terrorist who works directly for the Colonel.
Combat is his only source of pleasure.
A truly dangerous character.
Doctor Geo Mandrake
A genius working in the military's genetic engineering labs.
He was secretly a member of the Colonel's organization.
Involved in deranged experiments to develop biological weapons.

▲A list of other characters who appear in Contra: Hard Corps. The aliens themselves are not behind the events of this game; instead, the evil masterminds are an armed human force who seek to use the aliens for military purposes.


Starting Point
Truck runs into enemy grunts, players jump out from the explosion.
[Grunts] Machine Soldier TYPE-R
TYPE-G
TYPE-GC
TYPE-SG
Multi-legged Cancons
[Events] Tanker truck explodes.
Sniper's nest is destroyed.
Metal tower collapses.
Ground splits and rises straight up, revealing cannons.
[Mid Boss] Fire Dragon
Destroys wall with fire and emerges from the flames.
Spews flames from tentacle cannon.
[Events + Grunts]
Building falls over.
Anaconda cannon appears.
[Stage Boss]
Powerd Ninja Muramasa
Screen scrolls up to show it standing atop a building.
It jumps down from the building, crushing a car beneath.
[Crazy Bird]
Core appears and starts moving when player grabs on.
They fly around, dragging the player with them.
Destroyed by attack from stage boss.
[Maximum Jumbo]
Rampaging in the background, but suddenly jumps into the foreground.
[Dialogue] Conversation with Deadeye Joe
Dialogue options
To B stage
To C stage

▲Layout of Stage 1. Players are sure to remember being unexpectedly plunged into the heart of the action with its dynamic structure.


[Tanker]
When attacked, these parked tanker trucks explode, taking out nearby enemy soldiers.
[Sniper's Nest]
Attack these to eliminate all machine soldier TYPE-SG patrolling them.
[Ground Fissure]
Suddenly rises up when player gets close.
These cannons attack the player.
UP

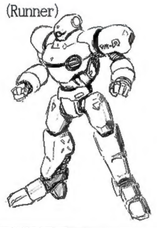

[Stage Boss]
Swift pursuit robot OH Utamaro
Attacks with its segmented arms.
Stretches these arms to pound with hammer-like blows.

◀▲A list of gameplay elements included in Stage 1 (left) and a rough sketch of the "swift pursuit robot," the boss of Stage 2 (right). Players square off against the swift pursuit robot in a pseudo-3D screen with plenty of depth, creating the unique perception that they must fight while being hunted down.

14 List of Enemies

(ENEMY)

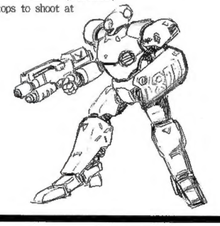
Machine Soldier TYPE-R (Runner)
★Runs toward the player.



(ENEMY)

Colonel Bahamut - Power Glove Style
★Equipped with a massive mechanical arm which he uses for close range attacks.

Machine Soldier TYPE-G (Gunner)
★Runs forward, stops to shoot at the player.



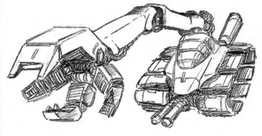
Deadeye Joe the Rocket
★Attacks using his gun and laser sword.

(ENEMY)

Dynamite Bahamut
★Uses powerful close range attacks.

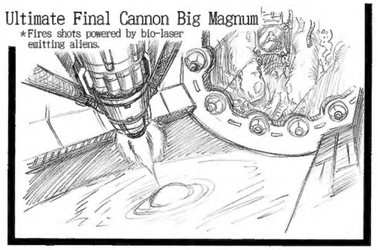
(ENEMY)

Mach 777
★Jumps and tackles to attack players.



Bahamut Overdrive
★Attacks with its tentacles and eye lasers. Can also swallow players to deal continuous damage.

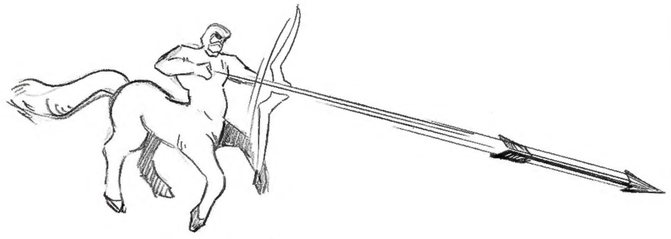
Ultimate Final Cannon Big Magnum
★Fires shots powered by bio-laser emitting aliens.



▲Concept art of enemies. Players face Colonel Bahamut, the mastermind behind the events of this installment, on nearly all of its branching paths. They will assume varying forms, depending on the path taken.

[Stage Boss: Death Horoscope]

Sagittarius: Attacks using a bow and arrow.



Aries: Attacks by tackling.

Gemini: Attacks with rotating laser beam that fires downward.

▲Final design draft of the Stage 4 boss. This oddball boss battle pits the player against a morphing constellation in virtual reality. It is just as difficult as it is strange.

▲The sprite art of RD008 and RC011, the playable characters in the Probotector series. Their designs have a different flavor from those of the mainline Contra series.

SNSP
RH004　「SUPER　PROBOTECTOR」

Plotline to be used in the game manual and on the back side of the game box.

The Probotector is a fighting robot that was developed in top secret by a special scientific mechanized unit.

It is the year 2636. Once again the aliens who lost in battle to the Probotector have regained their full strength and have begun a large-scale invasion.
Humans are mere rag dolls in the face of the aliens overwhelming resources, scientific capability and powerful life force.

Six months later, two fighting robots appear in the devastated city controlled by the aliens, -RD008 and RC011-the strongest Probotectors in history.

A heated battle begins once more.

▲The plotline of Super Probotector. Although details such as the featured characters may differ, it takes place in the same era as the mainline Contra series.

▲Design drafts of the Super Probotector logo (above) and proposed color schemes (below). The single consistency among all of these proposals is the design of the series title “Probotector,” which remains unchanged in each proposal.

Contra Anniversary Collection

The History of Contra

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